

**INVESTIGATING ROLE STRAIN, COPING AND
SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING IN COMBINING
MULTIPLE ROLES.**

by

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ABSTRACT

INVESTIGATING ROLE STRAIN, COPING AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING IN COMBINING MULTIPLE ROLES.

SURINDERJIT BANGA

This thesis investigates some of the salient factors involved in women's experience of combining and coping with multiple roles. A total of four studies are undertaken using both quantitative and qualitative methods to progressively focus on those factors which are identified as particularly relevant. Consequently, data is gathered using diary, interview and questionnaire methods in order to cast light upon the precise nature of the relationship between combining multiple roles, reported life satisfaction, coping and personality.

In addition to identifying which particular role combinations lead to the greatest conflict, the research also clarifies the optimum number of role demands associated with reports of high life satisfaction. In so doing, the thesis provides support for the Scarcity Hypothesis as well as supplying detail about the precise nature of the role combinations associated with high and low life satisfaction. The implications of these findings for advising women on role combinations are considered.

The nature of the relationship between certain key role combinations and preferred coping strategies is explored. Results suggest a relationship between certain role strains and particular coping strategies. Emotion-focused coping is preferred for inter-role conflict whereas 'superwoman' coping is more prevalent for role overload. Finally, the relationship between two major personality factors, role strain and coping, is investigated. Individuals with high scores for neuroticism are identified as expressing greater inter-role conflict, and using fewer emotion-focused coping strategies, compared with those with low scores on this scale.

The implications of these findings in relation to potential social and therapeutic interventions are discussed and it is proposed that counselling and counter-conditioning might be employed to help change both cognitions and behaviour. The thesis concludes with a reflexive look at findings, issues of contention, avenues for future research, and potential practical implications.

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I would like to dedicate chapter seven to 'Sheila' one of my participants who tragically died of cancer before this thesis was submitted.

AUTHORS DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other university award.

A programme of advanced study was undertaken which involved a research and statistics course, minitab, SPSS-X and Statistica, held in the department of Psychology, University of Plymouth. Other courses which were attended included lectures on research design and women studies also at the University of Plymouth.

Relevant scientific seminars and conferences were regularly attended and papers presented. Conference papers presented are as follows;

Combining Multiple Roles presented to the Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group, University of Wales College of Cardiff, 28th November 1992.

Stress and Coping in women returning to work, presented at The British Psychological Society, Annual Conference 2-5 April 1993.

Coping with multiple roles, presented at the Social Psychology Section Conference, Jesus College, Oxford, 22nd-24th September 1993.

Stress, women, and coping, presented in Bucharest, Romania, 12th May 1997.

The importance of measurement, presented at in Arad, Romania, 14 - 16 May 1997.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Since prehistoric times women have been required to occupy a number of different roles. Significant amongst several others are the major roles of spouse, parent, and worker, all of which require a substantial degree of time and commitment. Often the spousal and parental roles have been seen as more stable than the work role. For many women, participation in the latter role has often depended upon the needs, customs, and attitudes of society. In the year 2000 BC, in most societies, 'upper-class' women were often limited to their spousal and parental roles, and work outside of the home was considered to be a disreputable pursuit which was only fit for the working and peasant classes. All over the world women from the lower classes worked either as slaves or in a variety of other roles such as sellers, seamstresses, cobblers, and even as stone crushers for the purpose of making roads. By the 14th century, women in England and France were accepted along with men as tailors, barbers, carpenters, and saddlers but their remuneration for this work was much less than their male counterparts. Furthermore, certain occupations such as dressmaking were considered to be solely for women. Similarly, family-related activities such as housework and raising children were considered to be solely the responsibility of women. During the 18th and 19th centuries, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, many of the hand-made goods produced in the home by women who worked, were manufactured by machines in factories. This resulted in competition for jobs between males and females and consequently many female workers became concentrated in textile mills and clothing factories which invariably paid very poorly, and usually involved long hard hours of labour.

By the 1900's the white-collar work force was beginning to develop rapidly. Many employees were middle class women who worked as teachers, nurses, and typists. However, the majority of these women were single and once they married they were required to leave the work force because it was considered unacceptable for respectable married mothers to work outside of the home. The onset of both World Wars dramatically

changed events for married women with children because the skills and labour shortage during this time meant that it became acceptable (and was openly encouraged) for women to resume work in the fields, factories, mines and offices, whilst continuing to raise children. Following the war years, many women resumed their more traditional family-centred roles, but those women whose husbands did not return from war had little option but to continue working in order to support their families.

In the 1960's a new trend emerged which showed a greater number of married women working out of economic necessity. This trend developed as a result of changing demographic, economic and social patterns. Infant-mortality rates were lower, whereas adult life expectancy was higher. Birth control was more widely available and this gave women a greater freedom from child care responsibilities. These developments, and the high inflation rates, meant that both husbands and wives needed to work in order to earn enough income to sustain a sufficient standard of living. Since the 1960's, developments in legislation benefiting women and the Women's Movement for equal pay and other rights made it easier for many to pursue employment whilst raising children and taking the main responsibility for household matters. In the 1990's, inequalities still exist in education and employment which serve to prevent women from occupying the same percentage of (traditionally male-dominated) posts in government, medicine, engineering, transport, sport and the forces. Nevertheless, there are a high percentage of women who not only engage in spousal and parental responsibilities, but also significantly contribute to the total household earnings by working outside the home.

Although approximately two out of three working mothers opt for part time employment, these trends are changing as pressure on mothers to work is increasing (Duncan, Giles and Webb 1995). Many resume work after child birth in order to avoid the loss of skills and to ensure that they do not jeopardise opportunities for promotion. There is also greater awareness that nursery education and child care outside the home can be beneficial for children's development (Duncan et al 1995). This has increased pressure on mothers to resume paid work in order to help with household earnings and to give their children the benefits of nursery education or child care provided by others. The change in

attitude, and awareness of the potential benefits of child care provided by others, has been particularly important in encouraging and persuading women to resume work and other interests outside of the home. Previously, many women were made to feel unnecessarily guilty as a result of Bowlby's (1963) claims. He proposed that children's psychological development would suffer seriously if their mothers did not provide them with constant attention, which could only be found in a monotrophic relationship that provided a warm, intimate, and continuous bond with the mother. Ironically, this advice contradicted earlier notions which suggested that the display of tender emotions would be detrimental to a child's development. Evidently, arguments about child care practice can be influential in terms of employment patterns for women.

Foster, Jackson, Thomas, Hunter and Bennet (1995) argued that a number of other demographic and economic characteristics determined the extent to which women worked whilst raising children. These factors included the number and age of children, the mother's educational background, her attitude to work, the economic situation of the household, and the age of the mother. Not surprisingly, in a household that has fewer children, there is a greater likelihood of the mother engaging in paid work. Similarly, the older her youngest child is, the more likely that the mother will resume paid work or resume an 'outside' interest for herself (Harrop and Moss 1994; Foster et al 1995). One implication of having many children is that child care arrangements can be complicated and expensive. Consequently, it is often more viable for a mother to look after her own children and reduce the potential financial burden. Also, the older the youngest child, the less the need for qualified and experienced childminders because older siblings are often available to look after younger members of the family. Clearly, this latter option can help to cut the costs of childminding.

Women who work whilst they bring up young children often have husbands or partners who also work (Harrop and Moss 1994). Ward, Dale and Joshi (1993) suggested that one reason for this is because husbands and wives often have similar attitudes to work, whereby either both or neither prefers to work. Thomson (1996), investigated attitudes towards the 'proper' role of women and found that of the women who worked, two out of

three felt that working mothers could establish just as "warm and secure a relationship" with their children as women who did not work. Only one in ten women who did not work took this viewpoint. Married mothers who worked part-time took a stance somewhere between these two views. It seems possible that these attitudes may only serve to justify particular positions, rather than actually influencing the behavioural choice in the first instance.

Working women also tend to have higher qualifications than women who do not work. This is perhaps because they have pursued extra training whilst at work, or because better qualified individuals have enhanced opportunities to find work. Another influential factor which can determine whether or not women work is whether their income makes a significant contribution to the total household income. Sly (1996), suggested that if employment does not make a significant contribution, women generally do not engage in paid work. Harrop and Moss (1994) found that a woman's age is a significant factor. They found that mothers aged 30-39 were more likely to work than those under the age of 30, who are more likely to be wives and parents. According to a survey by Thomson (1996), women's occupational status did not appear to be a significant factor in whether or not women worked. Indeed, a more important factor was the quality and cost of child care facilities for pre-school children. Her survey revealed that more than 50% of the respondents in her sample would have preferred to work, but only when their children were at school. However, in practice many women are denied this choice. The quality and cost of child care is often a major decisive factor in whether or not women work or become 'homemaker', at least during the child's pre-school years.

Grana, Moore, Wilson and Miller (1993) stated that little research has been conducted on homemakers or housework, primarily because housework is associated almost exclusively with women and tends to remain invisible. It does not capture the interest or make headlines in the same way as stories about women who engage in high profile traditionally male-dominated professions. Grana and her colleagues argue that little is known about the variety of tasks involved in homemaking, but she does include the following: food shopping, meal preparation, household purchases, house cleaning, washing

clothes, ironing, mending, gardening, care of the children, preparing children for school, transporting children, preparing children for bed, disciplining children, hiring child care help, holiday planning, and financial planning. They also argue that:

"... any job is frustrating when it must be repeated just as soon as it is finished, or it cannot be postponed, or it typically has no clear-cut obtainable standards of completion."

(Grana, Moore, Wilson and Miller 1993 p.283).

Such a list of tasks undertaken by a woman who performs the role of housewife, is enormous. Yet despite these responsibilities, many women also manage to combine these tasks with full-time employment. It seems that whether a woman is engaged in work outside the home or not, there is little impact on how much time her husband spends on household tasks (Pleck 1985). On average, even when women are working, and are working the same hours as their husbands, they perform between 60 and 76 percent of the household tasks (Devereaux 1993). However, with regard to child care arrangements, fathers are more likely to be involved when the mother is employed than when she does not work outside the home (Deutsch, Lussier and Servis 1993). Nonetheless, employed mothers spend substantially more time taking care of young children than employed fathers.

In servicing these multiple roles women are having to meet different and sometimes conflicting requirements. Much of the research reviewed here and in the following chapters suggests that many women are attempting to meet diverse role demands with little or no support from spouses, family and friends. One outcome of meeting several different role demands is that of role strain. This is characterised by pressure from within and between roles that causes distress to the individual. A commonly experienced role strain is role overload which Staat (1994) identifies as simply too much to do in the time available for it. He argues that there are three factors involved in role overload, namely quality, quantity, and time. The individual experiencing role overload is faced with choices. These choices can involve doing less work than expected, or doing the work less well and taking more time to do it. Role overload is considered in some detail in the following chapters together with the notion of inter-role conflict, which refers to the

incompatibility of roles. The roles of particular interest in the current research are the traditional roles of spouse and parent and the 'additional' roles of paid worker and 'self'. The 'self' role is a separate identity which concerns the individual's own needs, desires, interests, and concerns. The work role actually comprises of full-time employment and/or full-time education. As well as increasing numbers of women resuming full time employment, many are also returning to further and higher education. With increasingly available opportunities at colleges and universities, many women are undertaking the role of student alongside their traditional roles of spouse and parent and, in some cases, alongside the role of paid worker too. The additional role of student also presents some demands which may be incompatible with other roles or lead to role overload. Therefore, it is of interest to examine this role in combination with the other roles mentioned.

In the current research the role of paid worker and student are treated as one and referred to as the 'work' role and this is considered in relation to the roles of 'spouse', 'parent' and 'self'. The purpose of examining these four roles is to consider women's experience of multiple role combinations. In particular, one of the aims is to examine the degree of compatibility or conflict between particular pairs of roles. For example, this thesis will examine the degree of conflict which might arise from combining the spouse and work roles. Another aim is to examine the relationships between women's multiple role involvement, their life satisfaction, coping strategies and personality. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are used to explore these relationships. In common with much contemporary research, the studies presented in this thesis follow a progressive process which systematically investigates variables of interest as well as those variables which might help to provide insight into women's experience of multiple role combination. Given the progressive focusing approach to the research, this thesis follows a logical format and chapters are organised in the following way:

Chapter two provides a general contextual background to the whole thesis by providing literature reviews on the main areas of interest. It begins with an investigation of the literature on role involvement and the subsequent effects upon the individual. Multiple role involvement is denoted by a set of expectations which require certain patterns of

behaviour in given situations. For example, the role of parent demands specific requirements and these requirements are different from those required for the roles of spouse, or supervisor at work. This chapter focuses upon two major hypotheses. The first, the Role Accumulation Hypothesis, supports the notion that multiple role involvement has beneficial effects on the individual's general well-being (Sieber 1974; Marks 1977). The second, the Scarcity Hypothesis (Goode 1960; Coser 1974), suggests that multiple roles have a negative effect on well-being because the result of combining too many roles leads to role strain, particularly role overload and inter-role conflict. Role overload refers to the fulfilling of several roles with little time to meet the requirements of all roles (Caplan 1982), whereas inter-role conflict refers to demands from two or more roles which occur simultaneously and where adequate performance of one role jeopardises adequate performance of the other(s) (Barnett and Baruch 1985). This chapter highlights several different studies in support of each notion which have generated data that is often contradictory and suggests a need for clarification.

This chapter also reviews the theoretical background and research on life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is a cognitive judgement made by individuals about their lives. A measure of life satisfaction is used in the second quantitative study in order to measure the relationship between life satisfaction and inter-role conflict, and between life satisfaction and the number of role demands an individual undertakes. Following this, a review of coping is presented, beginning with the problematic nature of definitions. For example, terms and concepts are often interchangeably used in coping research when they actually have more specific meanings, and this can lead to confusion. The debate between personality versus situation-determined coping is explained and examined. Those coping strategies used specifically for inter-role conflict and role overload are identified and recognised as providing support for situational coping. This review recognises that coping can also be determined in terms of personality-based factors, where women are asked how they typically cope rather than how they cope with specific stressful incidents. Finally, the issue of coping effectiveness is addressed and then measured in study one which constitutes chapter four of this thesis.

- Chapter three provides an outline of general and specific issues related to research methodology and the methods used for gathering and analysing the data. This thesis poses several research questions and a number of hypotheses are consequently tested. These questions are addressed using a variety of different methods and processes. For example, in the pilot study the diary and interview methods were used for data collection in order to highlight a number of research questions. Thereafter, in studies two and three, the questionnaire method is used and the subsequent results are subjected to statistical analysis. The interviews conducted during study two are later reanalysed using the case study method in order to illustrate 'typical' cases and provide a fuller picture of some 'exemplar' participants. One of the major benefits of using different methodologies to progressively focus on particular questions in the four studies is that this allows for the triangulation of data obtained. Triangulation allows the researcher to feel more confident about similar findings obtained using different methods of enquiry. For example, this can be achieved by combining interview with observational or questionnaire data (Coolican 1996). In general, this chapter draws together the quantitative and qualitative approaches used in this research and discusses the merits and limitations of both. Information is supplied about the scales and measures used, the rationale for statistical procedures, and the analyses of results. In summary, this chapter provides some background to what was done and the detail about why and how it was done.

Chapter four reports on a preliminary investigative study using diary data and interviews. The aim of this study is to explore the extent of role strain experienced by participants who combine multiple roles. Investigation of situation-determined coping is undertaken in which women report a specific incident, which they consider stressful, and then rate the degree to which they consider it to have caused them stress on a scale of 1 -10. Women also report how they manage, control, and cope with the reported stressful incident and to what extent they consider this coping effective on a 1 -10 Likert scale. Women are then asked retrospectively to report on how they would have coped if they had other choices in terms of the coping strategies available to them. The reported stressors and the coping strategies are categorised under specific names assigned to them by the researcher.

Chapter five presents the second quantitative study using questionnaire data and interviews. The purpose of this study is to explore the number of role demands, inter-role conflicts and coping strategies in relation to life satisfaction. It was evident from interview data in the preliminary investigation that life satisfaction is an important concept in the lives of women who combined multiple roles. Therefore, this relationship is investigated further and is adopted as the focus for study two. Consequently, a high life satisfaction and a low life satisfaction group are used as comparisons for the number of role demands reported by women, such as children under the age of twelve. Life satisfaction comparison groups are also used for the measure of inter-role conflict between the roles of 'spouse', 'parent', 'worker', and 'self'. Furthermore, these two groups allowed comparisons to be made on problem-focused, emotion-focused and 'less effective' coping strategies. The interviews, which were also conducted at this stage, comprise chapter seven of this thesis.

Chapter six reports on a final quantitative study using questionnaire data. The purpose of this study is to measure the relationship between personality, inter-role conflict, and coping strategies. The dimensions of extraversion and neuroticism are considered in terms of high and low scores on these scales and comparisons are undertaken between these two groups. The same measures of inter-role conflict and coping strategies as used in study two, are adopted for study three. Comparisons between the high and low groups are made for inter-role conflict and coping strategies.

Chapter seven is a qualitative analysis of four contrasting case studies. A comparison is made of four cells (containing student-worker with high and low life satisfaction in a 2 x 2 matrix). These include a student reporting low life satisfaction, a student reporting high life satisfaction, a paid worker reporting low life satisfaction and a paid worker reporting high life satisfaction. This chapter considers interview data and the detailed questionnaire responses provided by the four participants (one from each cell) in relation to the quantitative responses. Where it is considered appropriate, quotations from participants are used to illustrate the case study.

Chapter eight is a general discussion which examines the main findings from all the studies in the context of the current literature and research. Four key findings are selected and discussed in relation to those theoretical issues which are supported or contradicted. The implication of these findings for psychological intervention and practice are also examined and some proposals are made. New findings and anomalous results are revisited and their implications are considered in the context of the literature. Finally, a critique of the thesis is presented in which areas for future research are identified and suggestions for further theoretical and practical work are made.

In summary, the aim of this research is to investigate women's experience of multiple role involvement in a systematic way. Study one identifies those role strains and coping strategies reported by women when they combine multiple roles. Study two further examines inter-role conflict, which is the most frequently reported role strain, particularly in relation to identifying which particular roles are in conflict. Coping strategies used by women who combine multiple roles are measured according to problem-focused, emotion-focused and 'less effective' preferences. The relationship between inter-role conflict, coping strategies and the number of role demands undertaken is considered in the context of satisfaction with life. The final study considers the role of personality in relation to inter-role conflicts and coping strategies because interview data suggested that personality might be particularly influential in the experience of role combination. The aim of the qualitative chapter is to provide in-depth comparisons and data triangulation on some of the factors which might have influenced questionnaire responses, as well as providing insight into the unique experience of role combination. Each study is presented separately but in a way which models the approach to research known as progressive focusing, and in this context, detailed literature reviews specific to each study are presented at the start of each study. Consequently, a more general review of the literature is provided in chapter two, in order to construct a contextual framework for the thesis as a whole.

CHAPTER TWO

A THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a broad review of the literature which underpins the qualitative and the quantitative studies that follow. Each study is presented with a more focused literature review leading to those specific research questions and hypotheses which are to be tested. This chapter deals with the wider issues which set the contextual framework for all of the subsequent research. It begins with a review of employment trends over approximately twenty years, with a specific focus on married women with children, because a major aim of the current research is to investigate women's experience of combining multiple roles. Consideration is given to a review of some of the 'classic' studies which defend one of two prime positions. The first of these positions contends that multiple role involvement has beneficial effects whereas the second presents the view that multiple role involvement leads to negative effects. 'Negative effects' essentially refers to role strain and consequently, a review of the literature in relation to inter-role conflict and role overload is also provided.

Consideration is also given to the topic of life satisfaction and the relationship which exists between this and combining multiple roles. A review of coping is presented which deals with issues of defining and measuring coping effectiveness as well as some of the theories about gender differences in coping. Finally, a brief review of personality is provided which concentrates on neuroticism and extraversion because these measures are used in study three. For the sake of completeness some brief discussion of other personality theories and perspectives are included. Therefore, the purpose of this literature review chapter is to provide a contextual background for the three quantitative and the qualitative studies which follow. More detailed literature reviews, specific to each study, are presented in the introduction to each of the research studies.

2.2 Demographic trends

Prior to the 1939-45 war, women typically left their paid employment upon getting married. However, in the 1950's increasingly more women remained in paid work until their first child was born, with many returning to part-time employment some years later. More recently, and particularly in the 1990's, women are increasingly remaining in full-time employment, perhaps partly because of improved maternity leave provisions (Macran, Joshi and Dex 1996). Indeed, the number of employed British women has roughly doubled in the post war period, largely due to the increase in the number of part-time jobs filled by married women (Joshi, Layard and Owen 1985). By 1992, 73% of married women aged 16-59 were in paid employment outside the home. Significantly, in terms of the social trends, this is the same percentage as for non-married women (Office of Population Census and Surveys 1993). Furthermore, the number of married women in employment with children under the age of five rose from 27% in 1973 to 50% in 1992. Joshi and Hinde (1993) estimated that the break from employment attributed to becoming a mother has at least halved between 1950 and 1970 and, by 1988, the employment of mothers with children under the age of three had risen to 33% from 18% in 1980. McRae (1993) also supports the finding that the gap between leaving employment to become a mother and returning to employment has shortened over the last twenty years. Another explanation for this rise in female employment is the increased demand for part-time, usually female, labour which often involves job-sharing and job-splitting schemes. These schemes allow employers to split a full-time job in order to create two part-time posts. Whilst maternity leave has been proposed as a major factor in contributing to women's participation in employment, McRae (1993) argues that this is unlikely because only 50% of economically active women were entitled to maternity leave, and these women were more likely to be at the top end of the employment hierarchy.

Clearly, not all women who resume employment after childbirth reach the top of their career structures and not all women have access to maternity leave. Ward, Dale and Joshi (1994) found that mothers who delayed their childbearing were more likely to be better educated and, as a consequence, they were more likely to be working in higher level

occupations. Additionally, they were more likely to have adequate incomes with which to pay for child care, more flexible working arrangements, and to be highly motivated to remain in employment. In contrast, women who became teenage mothers were generally less well educated and many did not have the chance to experience any employment before the birth of their first child. These women were often lone parents and had little income with which to purchase child care and consequently little support to ease the pressures of combining work with parenting responsibilities. For these women the issue of maternity leave simply did not arise. Ward, Dale and Joshi (1994) have identified child care responsibilities as being the key reason why women do not work or work only on a part time basis. They describe how women use 'packages' of child care which involve combining both formal (paid) child care and informal (unpaid) care provided by families and friends. Whilst the option of paid child care is expensive, it does allow the mother to continue developing a career or engaging in a job for positive longer term benefits. These authors also emphasise the emotional, psychological, and social benefits derived from having a paid job and contrast this with those mothers who have had to leave their employment in order to attend to child care responsibilities.

Benefits such as easily available child care facilities, flexible hours, unpaid leave during school holidays and media coverage aimed at recruiting women with children, were used extensively in the 1980's to recruit and retain women in the labour market. One reason for this was that birth rates had been falling since the 1960's, and during the 1980's politicians and employers discovered what was referred to as the 'demographic time bomb'. This described a reduction in the number of young people entering the labour market as a result of decline in the birth rate. The economic growth under Thatcher's government coupled by a decreasing population of young people raised fears of a labour shortage and attention was focused on women who had left employment to have and raise a family.

The relationship between the working status of women and the age of their youngest child helps to demonstrate the changing pattern of employment from 1981 to 1996. This substantial change in employment status is one of the factors which originally

precipitated the research presented in this thesis. Table 2.1 presents figures for the working status of women by age of youngest dependent child.

Age of youngest child	1981		1989		1996	
	full time	part time	full time	part time	full time	part time
0 - 4	5.9	16.2	13.2	26	17	31
5 - 10	16.8	27.7	20.8	43.7	22	43
11 - 15	30	33.2	32.8	40.7	34	41

Table 2.1: The percentage of women working in 1981, 1989 and 1996 by the age of the youngest child.

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics (1996).

Table 2.1 demonstrates the rise in the number of women with dependent children in employment. For example, in 1981, 22.1% of women with the youngest child aged 0-4 were engaged in paid employment. This figure increased to 39.2% in 1989, showing that in eight years there was an increase of 17.1%. Furthermore, between 1989 and 1996, there was an increase of 8.8%, showing that 48% of women in this category were engaged in paid employment. For women in employment with the youngest child aged 5-10 years, the figures are, not surprisingly, much higher when compared with those with the youngest child aged 0-4. For example, in 1981, 44.5% of women with children aged 5-10 were engaged in employment, with this figure increasing to 64.5% for 1989, showing an increase of 20% over eight years. For 1996, the increase is slight, at 0.5%, showing that 65% of women in this category were in paid employment. Amongst women with the youngest child aged 11-15, 63.2% were employed in 1981. This percentage increased to 73.5% in 1989 and a further increase, albeit small, to 75% can be seen for 1996. Table 2.1 also provides figures for part time and full time employment across 1981, 1989 and 1996, according to the age of the youngest child. Perhaps not surprisingly, these figures suggest that the older the age of the child, the greater the percentage of women in employment. Moreover, they highlight the fact that many more women are in part time employment compared to full time employment, regardless of the age of their youngest child.

Other commentators, notably Sly (1996), reported similar trends for women resuming further and higher education. At the start of the 1990's there was a rapid growth in women's involvement in further and higher education. In fact, between 1990/91 and 1994/95, the number of female students enrolled in full-time education in the UK increased by 55% and the number in full-time further education increased by 60%.

In conclusion, these figures serve to illustrate that in recent years, women have been returning to the workforce and to education in much higher numbers than was the case fifteen or twenty years ago. This has led to increased demands upon them. Specifically, more women now have to combine the multiple roles of student, worker, spouse and parent than hitherto. This is likely to have an impact upon their perceived levels of satisfaction for life, particularly given that they are required to meet several different, and sometimes conflicting, demands from their multiple role involvement.

2.3 Combining Multiple Roles

The current research investigates multiple role involvement and, in particular, the roles of 'spouse', 'parent', 'worker' or 'student', and 'self'. Roles can be regarded as a set of expectations and rules for behaviour, where individuals 'act' out many different scripts in many different situations (Miell 1994). The roles of 'worker' and 'student' are not treated as separate in either the literature review or the quantitative analysis because both signify an additional role to the traditional family roles of spouse and parent. Indeed, Brandenburg (1974) argued that "married college students with young children are as susceptible to diverse role pressures as women in paid employment". Moreover, as the focus of the research is on women's multiple role involvement, the roles of paid worker and student will be treated as one, and will hitherto be referred to as the 'work' role. The combination of multiple roles is arguably divided into two main hypotheses. One emphasises the positive aspects of role combination, particularly that of paid work with existing roles. The other highlights the negative effects of combining multiple roles, particularly combining work with family roles. These two positions are namely the Role Accumulation Hypothesis, which possess the former position and the Scarcity Hypothesis, which argues for the latter position.

2.4 Role Accumulation Hypothesis

The Role Accumulation Hypothesis (Sieber 1974; Marks 1977) takes the view that an individual's involvement in several different roles results in a number of increasing rewards associated with these roles. Rewards in this context refers to increased self esteem, recognition, prestige, financial remuneration and social contacts. Individuals who support this position argue that the benefits gained from multiple role involvement serve to offset any of the obligations and costs which might be involved in role occupancy (Facione 1994; Buller 1994). Authors defending the Role Accumulation Hypothesis argue that an additional role such as employment serves to protect the individual from the negative effects caused by the traditional roles of parent or spouse (Waldron & Jacobs 1989). It is argued that this is because employment is generally associated with privileges whereas the roles of parent and spouse are generally associated with many more obligations. Thoits (1992) further argues that a greater number of social roles, regardless of their level of demands is associated with enhanced well-being. She illustrates her point by reference to women who demonstrate higher levels of illness symptoms solely because they have fewer roles than their comparison group, which in this case were men. The fact that her comparison group were men, is a potential flaw in Thoits's study and consequently, it is not possible to discern whether the difference between the groups is due to gender differences or to the number of social roles occupied. Thoits argument suggests that multiple role involvement should succeed in reducing symptoms and increasing psychological well-being, but does not elaborate on 'how many' roles constitute a 'greater number' and 'how many' roles are required in order to improve 'psychological well-being'. Furthermore, she does not stipulate exactly what is being measured when 'psychological well-being' improves by increasing social roles. Both of these points are given further consideration in the quantitative studies which follow. The additional complication in this argument is that with increasing role involvement, achieved by participating in employment, it is not possible to separate social selection from social causation. It is possible that women who have good health, and are healthy psychologically, may actually be more inclined to engage in multiple role involvement, and consequently to be in employment. Indeed, the factors which are responsible for self-selection in taking on multiple roles could also be responsible for lower levels of

symptoms in this group of people. On the other hand, women who are experiencing a high level of symptoms, may be more inclined to drop some of their social roles. Therefore, it could be that the self selected nature of the group, rather than the effects of multiple role involvement is the determining factor in whether people do or do not engage in multiple roles.

Although there is considerable research showing the positive effects of combining multiple roles, many of the studies are methodologically inadequate and use pre-selected comparison groups. For example, Barnett and Baruch (1985) compared employed women with non-employed women, showing beneficial effects from a greater number of roles for the former group of participants. Hong and Seltzer (1995) reported differences in psychological well-being for a sample of mothers who had multiple roles (particularly as caregivers to a son or daughter with mental retardation) when compared with those mothers who occupied fewer roles. The results of their research showed greater psychological well-being amongst those mothers with the greatest number of roles. Again, whether social selection or social causation is at play is arguable. Studies examining the effects of role involvement have also compared single women with married women (Barnett & Baruch 1985), and employed mothers with non-employed mothers (LaRosa 1988). However, these studies have produced mixed results which in some cases have been contradictory. This may be due to a number of diverse factors including the definitions of role used, the measurement of psychological well-being, and the comparison groups used.

2.5 The Scarcity Hypothesis

The Scarcity Hypothesis was first put forward by Goode (1960) and extended by Coser (1974). The position states that roles have the effect of draining an individual of their energy, which means that the greater the number of roles an individual occupies, the greater the energy expenditure and, subsequently, the greater the probability of conflict between different roles. In other words, multiple role involvement leads to role strain, where role strain is defined as:

"a type of role pressure particularly relevant to married women who often simultaneously perform the role of wife, mother and employee. Rather than encountering a transitional sequence from one role to another, the women encounter an accumulation of disparate roles, each requiring deep commitment."
(Woods 1980 p.138).

Role strain requires individuals to compromise between their energy levels and the demands of the social organisations or places of employment which impose these demands. This is a stressful experience for the individual because although role strain does not impact upon the person suddenly and unexpectedly, it is nonetheless slow to dissipate (Pearlin 1989). There are essentially many different types of role strain. For example, 'intra role' conflict, described as conflict within the same role, and 'time based' conflict which arises as a result of competition between the time allocated to specific types of roles. Although there has been extensive research on different types of role conflicts (Phoenix, Woollett and Lloyd 1991; Newton, Handy and Fineman 1995), only two particular types are of primary concern in the current research. These types are 'inter-role conflict' and 'role overload'. Inter-role conflict is denoted by competing pressures arising from participation in different roles whereas role overload is the role strain which results from too many role demands and insufficient time in which to complete these demands.

2.6 Inter-role conflict

Inter-role conflict arises when:

"role pressures associated with membership in one organisation are in conflict with pressures stemming from membership of another group".
(Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal 1964 p.20).

In essence, inter-role conflict is experienced when the pressures arising in one role are incompatible with pressures arising in another role, and where the emphasis is on the incompatibility of role demands. More recently, Baruch and Barnett (1987) defined inter-role conflict as arising when the demands from two or more roles are such that adequate performance of one role jeopardises adequate performance of the other(s). This definition emphasises not just the incompatibility between roles, but also the effects on performance when inter-role conflict occurs.

There is considerable support to illustrate the notion of inter-role conflict, particularly for working mothers who experience conflict between their family and work roles. Furthermore, inter-role conflict has been associated with negative effects. For example, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) found that work and family conflicts were associated with increased health risks, and Pleck (1985) found associations with decreased productivity and high absenteeism. Although work and family conflicts indicate tensions between paid employment and family roles, research in this area does not separate which specific family roles are in conflict with employment. Consequently, this is one of the aims of the current research. Some researchers have located the conflict between the work and family role as occurring between the work and the parental roles (Frone and Rice 1987); Thompson and Blau (1993). Indeed, Simon (1995) also identified conflict between the roles of spouse and paid work. Furthermore, Rothman (1978) separates inter-role conflict between a woman's 'self' role and the parental role, as well as her 'self' role and her spousal role and suggest that, too often, the self role has received little attention because it is assumed to comprise of both spousal and parental identities. She argues that what benefits the husband and child cannot be assumed to automatically benefit the woman. In fact, it may be the case that benefits for the husband and child actually result in depleting the woman's self role. Certainly, Pleck's (1985) "Sensitisation Theory" states that the 'self' role for women is associated with spousal and parental responsibilities and because women are 'keepers of marriage' (Person 1989), there is pressure to succeed in these roles. Therefore, it seems that much of the research on women's multiple roles have assumed the 'self' role to be part of the parental and spousal role, whilst acknowledging conflict between the 'self' and other roles. The current research will give consideration to the 'self' role as well as separating the family roles into spousal and parental identities, in order to examine the conflict between these roles and the role of paid worker.

2.7 Role overload

Role overload is also a type of role strain. It is defined more precisely as:

*"fulfilling several different roles simultaneously which consequently leads to too many role demands and insufficient time to meet the requirement of each role".
(Baruch and Barnett 1987 p.64).*

The emphasis is upon the limitation of time rather than the incompatibility of role demands. Specific samples of the population have been identified as being more susceptible to role overload than other samples. For example, authors such as Pleck (1985) and Arber, Gilbert and Dale (1985), have attributed high levels of distress amongst working women as a result of role overload when compared to non-working women or working men. Similarly, Walker and Best (1991), found that full time employed mothers were more distressed than non-employed mothers. Research in support of claims that role overload is more prominent amongst women who combine the greatest number of roles is plentiful. Several studies support the finding that role overload (and inter-role conflict) is frequently equated with women's experience of role involvement (Woods 1985; Barnett and Baruch 1985; Pleck 1985; Kelloway and Barling 1990).

Although ample evidence exists to support the concept of role overload, few authors have put forward plausible explanations for it. One author who has is Rosenfield (1989) who argued that role overload may serve to create more symptoms for women than for men because it follows the same process as having low power. Her argument states that employment for women is not consistently positive as suggested by the Role Accumulation Hypothesis because it often "trades one source of low control for another". The increases in personal control along with other benefits obtained through employment is often offset by the experience of having too much to do in a short space of time. Rosenfield argues that women experience greater levels of anxious and depressive symptoms because positions of low power produce low actual control and this, in turn, produces low perceived control. It would seem that combining multiple roles has beneficial effects such as increasing control and power, particularly when employment is one of these roles. However, it also seems that too many role demands serve to reduce control and increase distress to levels where little or no control or power is perceived. The current research will further

investigate this issue by looking at the relationship between role demands and subjective well-being as measured by life satisfaction. In particular, it will investigate the nature of 'too few' or 'too many' roles and how this is related to levels of life satisfaction. For example, how many role demands constitute 'too few' or 'too many' and what is the relationship of role demands to life satisfaction?

2.8 Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction can be defined as the cognitive evaluation an individual makes of his or her life (Ryff and Keyes 1995). Diener (1994) referred to life satisfaction as the main cognitive component of subjective well-being. It can be described as a global evaluation by a person of their own life by constructing a standard that is appropriate for them and comparing the circumstances of their lives to that standard. The emphasis is upon the subjective judgement rather than upon an externally imposed or objective standard. The structure of life satisfaction requires a measure of several different domains which are of importance to a respondent. Individuals vary in the importance they allocate to various domains such as health, wealth and marriage. Some people may be happy with one particular domain and unhappy with another, and total life satisfaction is derived from summing responses to all domains.

Research which aims to link life satisfaction to role involvement has produced mixed findings. On the one hand, women who report multiple role involvement also report higher life satisfaction (Kandel, Davies and Ravies 1985). On the other hand, working women with young children report decreases in life satisfaction. It is possible that working women with young children are experiencing role strain which is reflected in their low life satisfaction scores. This issue is considered in the quantitative studies which follow by investigating the relationship between role strain, particularly that of combining role demands and inter-role conflict, and life satisfaction. There is support from Facione (1994) to suggest that work-family conflicts are associated with reduced life satisfaction although, once again, little effort was made to identify those specific family roles which conflicted with the work role. According to Alderman (1994), respondents who do not report role strain when they are involved in multiple roles have

higher life satisfaction compared with respondents who do report experiencing role strain. It is possible that changes in individual circumstances, such as increased income from employment, serve to increase life satisfaction by the same process. The evidence from Lehman, Slaughter and Myers (1991) and Oliver and Mohamad (1992) would suggest that life circumstances and life satisfaction covary contemporaneously, whereby improved life circumstances may lead to positive evaluations and therefore an improved satisfaction with life.

In the current research, levels of life satisfaction will be considered in relation to role involvement. In particular, life satisfaction will be considered not only in relation to role demands, but specifically in terms of the experience of inter-role conflict. In the qualitative analysis, the relationship between individual life circumstances and reported life satisfaction will be discussed in order to clarify the extent to which they influence each other.

2.9 Coping

Coping is a controversial concept which has been of interest to researchers for several decades. There is considerable disagreement over definitions of coping and consequently, ways of measuring it. To some extent, earlier definitions conceptualised coping as defence, although Haan (1977) argues that coping is distinguishable from defence. She shows how the distinction can be blurred by providing examples of coping which could, in the extreme, be considered as defence. Coping terms such as 'taking action' commonly referred to as a problem-focused coping strategy, may in certain circumstances represent a defence style denoted by inhibiting action. Similarly, 'seeking of information', which is another problem-focused coping strategy, may be regarded as defence when, in some extreme cases, information is gathered obsessively. Whilst these examples illustrate that there is scope for regarding some strategies as defence by considering their extremes, this is not the intention of those questionnaires which measure specific types of coping. For example, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) used only those questionnaire items which were considered to be measuring coping, and excluded items that may have been considered as defence when they constructed their 64 item Ways of Coping questionnaire.

The COPE (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989), which is used in the current research, based its questionnaire items on Folkman and Lazarus's (1980) checklist of coping items. All their coping items are considered to be conscious and accessible rather than operating at a preconscious level as does defence (Haan 1977). Folkman and Lazarus define coping as:

"the cognitive and behavioural efforts to master, tolerate, or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts among them".

(Folkman and Lazarus 1980 p.223).

Although there are similarities between the terminology used in coping research, researchers generally aim to distinguish coping from defence (Haan 1977; Lazarus 1966; Valliant 1976). Coping primarily refers to a conscious process and defence primarily refers to a preconscious or unconscious process as used by Freud (1936). Defensive processes are reality distorting and cannot be assessed by simple questionnaire items. Denial is a form of defending used to deal with anxiety in conjunction with anger (Freud 1940), or as a means of escaping confrontation of events and their negative implications (Rachman and Wilson 1980). However, denial in questionnaire items measuring coping refers to a conscious and easily accessible process that serves to temporarily keep distressing thoughts and emotions within tolerable limits. According to Haan (1977) coping involves:

"purpose, choice and flexible shift, adheres to intersubjective reality and logic, and allows and enhances proportionate affective expression. Defensiveness is compelled, negating, rigid, distorting of intersubjective reality and logic allows covert impulse expression, and embodies the expectancy that anxiety can be relieved without directly addressing the problem; Fragmentation is automated ritualistic, privatistically formulated, affectively directed and irrationally expressed in the sense that intersubjective reality is clearly violated"

(Haan 1977 p.34).

In other words, the coping process refers to an open system whereas defensive processes produce particular closure of the system. The distinction between Haan's typology of coping and defence is clear.

In 'The Ways of Coping Scale' (Folkman and Lazarus 1980) and the 'COPE' (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989), a distinction is made between problem-focused and

emotion-focused coping. The former refers to direct action taken to alter the source of stress, with the emphasis being upon tackling the source of the problem so as to alleviate it. The latter, emotion-focused coping denotes attempts to reduce or eliminate dysphoric emotions elicited by a stressor, by using certain mechanisms which allow for the control of emotions, but without actually tackling the source of stress. There are parallels here between Haan's (1977) reference to people being either copers (problem-focused) or avoiders/defenders (emotion-focused) and Roth and Cohen's (1986) reference to approach-avoidance as indicating problem-focused versus emotion-focused coping. Similar distinctions are used in French, Rodger and Cobb (1974) where coping is also called problem-focused, and denotes behaviour which is aimed at producing a change in the objective environment. Defence on the other hand, also known as emotion-focused coping, is behaviour which is aimed at changing subjective perceptions of fit without actually changing objective fit. Cognitive distortions, such as the refusal to think about a situation and to deny it from cognition, would be considered as meeting the definition of defence.

It is beneficial to address the widely used terminology in coping research in order to identify and decipher the meaning behind some of the key concepts. Much of the debate on terminology lies in the controversy about whether coping is personality or situation-determined. For example, coping resources are also referred to as coping styles and are personality based responses. They are stable, personal, and social factors which influence how an individual might respond to stressful situations, and include attitudinal and cognitive factors. The focus of attention is upon those internal and external resources available to an individual. Such factors influence the selection of appraisals and the coping process. On the other hand, coping strategies which are also referred to as coping efforts are well defined actions specifically selected in response to a given situation. These are adopted according to a given situation, rather than by a consistent style, and both coping strategies and coping efforts reflect a dynamic process which takes into account changing appraisals and person-environment factors.

Personality differences in coping may arise from a number of sources such as background, age, education and culture, as well as specific underlying dispositions. Personality may determine coping in two ways. Firstly, by adhering to a consistent style despite the situation which Folkman and Lazarus (1986) consider to be ineffective, given that situations and circumstances are constantly changing. Secondly, individuals may influence coping through a personality dimension which may predispose people to cope in a certain way. Previous research has focused heavily on either stable or situation variables (Ben-Porath and Tellegen 1990; Krohne 1990). However, according to Moos and Swindle (1990) there needs to be a balance of both stable and situational factors, and both need to be considered together. Certainly the COPE considers only those items that measure both personality-determined and situation-specific coping, rather than one at the cost of the other, and in this regard they fulfil Moos and Swindle's (1990) criteria.

Theories of coping often portray women as less able copers than samples of men with whom they are compared. Women generally fall at the lower end of the coping hierarchy partly because, according to Banyard and Graham-Bermann (1993), gender is often ignored in research on coping which is often treated as an abstract concept that is untouched by gender, race or class. Studies within this framework often involve men who are presumed to have numerous resources to help them in the experience of stress, and where coping is attributed to the personality characteristics of the individual. Consequently, when these models are applied to women, their coping ability is seen as less effective. In other words, where no actual gender differences have been found, the discussion of results would suggest otherwise. For example, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) studied 100 white women and men on their stress and coping responses, but found very few differences between them. Folkman and Lazarus concluded that:

"the most puzzling difference was that men used more problem-focused coping than women in situations that had to be accepted. Perhaps men persevere in problem-focused coping longer than women before deciding that nothing can be done; and even when nothing can be done, men may be disposed to think about the problem more than women".

(Folkman and Lazarus 1980 p.309).

Banyard and Graham-Bermann (1993) contend that although no outcome measure was used, Folkman and Lazarus' very use of language implied that the way their male sample coped was better than how their female sample coped. They also referred to the studies of Billings and Moos (1981), and Pearlin and Schooler (1978), as further examples of researchers who used similar methods but reverted back to the traditional model when discussing their results:

"there is a profound imbalance between the sexes in their possession and use of effective mechanisms. Men more often possess psychological attributes or employ responses that inhibit stressful outcomes of life problems and where women more often employ a response it is likely to result not in less stress, but in more".

(Pearlin and Schooler 1978 p.312).

Banyard and Graham-Bermann also argue that there is no mention of the fact that women seem to employ other coping strategies such as negotiation and forbearance more often than men. They suggest that negative judgements were made about women in spite of the observation that many differences were the same, and they argue that there was no discussion of whether such small levels of difference would appear significant in actual, observable behaviours. The issue of selecting coping strategies according to gender is not specifically addressed in the current research, given that the emphasis is upon multiple roles for women. However, the quantitative studies will investigate the selection of different coping strategies in relation to life satisfaction and personality.

2.10 Coping effectiveness

Coping effectiveness very much depends on what is defined as stress or role strain. For example, if role strain is the mis-match between two or more types of roles, then effective coping is the reduction of this mismatch. To cope is to manage, and effective coping often involves the reduction of emotional distress or the control of problems. Coping effectiveness depends on how the outcome is measured and over what period of time. For example, denial may be an effective coping strategy in the short term but in the long term its usage prevents the individual from tackling the source of stress (Boss 1980).

Aldwin and Revenson (1987) addressed three issues in understanding coping effectiveness. Firstly, 'causal directionality' which asks whether people who exhibit depressive symptoms select less effective coping strategies or whether selecting ineffective coping strategies leads to poorer mental health. They argue that the relationship is bi-directional, in that poor mental health causes an individual to choose ineffective coping strategies which serve to maintain the poor mental health. They further argue that the greater the problem, the more likely it is that individuals will choose ineffective or maladaptive coping strategies and these, in turn, increase the problem. Secondly, any attempt at controlling a situation has the effect of allowing the individual to perceive the situation as manageable which empowers them with a sense of control. There is support for the notion that the optimal or the most effective coping style consists of the largest repertoire of coping responses (Folkman 1984). Any effort at coping should change perceptions of situations as being uncontrollable or unpredictable. However, where efforts are being made but perceptions remain unchanged, these are wasted efforts (Seligman 1975). Not only are they wasted, but subsequent feelings of inadequacy and helplessness might then generalise across different situations. Thirdly, it is important to distinguish coping effectiveness from 'coping efficacy'. Although the two concepts are often interchangeably used, they have different meanings. Coping effectiveness refers to the relationship between coping and some outcome measure such as psychological distress. These measures are usually taken from an external researchers viewpoint rather than from the respondents viewpoint. Coping efficacy refers to the perception that the coping effort was or was not successful in achieving the individual's goals in a particular situation. Zautra and Wrabetz (1991) state that coping efficacy is the rating made by subjects of the success in terms of coping with specific life stressors. In study one, respondents were asked to rate 'how effective' their coping strategies were. In this study, a distinction was not made between coping effectiveness and coping efficacy because all respondents were asked to indicate the success of a coping strategy which was measured using the more familiar language of coping 'effectiveness'.

A very important point raised by Carver and Scheier (1994) was that not all coping produces the desired result. Some coping strategies have been classified as dysfunctional

or maladaptive, and these include; 'self-blame' (Bolger 1990; McCrae and Costa 1986), 'wishful thinking' (Bolger 1990; Felton, Revenson, and Hinrichsen 1984; Folkman and Lazarus 1985), 'escapism' (Rohde, Lewinsohn, Tilson, and Seeley 1990), overt efforts to deny the stressor's reality (Carver et al 1993), 'self-distraction' or 'mental disengagement', and 'behavioural disengagement' (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989). As well as arriving at a process of coping which produces the desired results, it is also important to identify and measure those coping strategies which impede or interfere with good outcomes. Carver and Scheier (1994) attempted to identify a broader range of coping responses than had previously been studied. They administered the COPE Inventory, which measured several distinct aspects of both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. The inventory also measured coping which is considered to be helpful together with coping which is potentially maladaptive. They found that in their sample of students taking exams, certain coping strategies induced feelings of threat and harm before the exam, and later induced dysfunctional coping following the exam, and before grades were posted. This illustrates the notion of ineffective or maladaptive versus effective coping strategies in a specific situation.

Coping strategies that are, on the face of it, dysfunctional, such as high anxiety and worrying might, according to Janis (1965) offer alternative functions. For example, 'worrying' is used for the reduction of stress, and is known as 'preparatory communication'. Janis noted in the "work of worrying", that the absence of cognitive preparation is responsible for people failing to cope with stress. He proposed that the absence of an anticipated fear and mental rehearsal contributed to the failure because they are essential for developing self-delivered reassurances. Therefore their absence leads to a feeling of helplessness and increased vulnerability. It seems that preparatory communication gives the individual an opportunity to "pre-live" an experience or to conduct the work of worrying in order to develop an imagery of being able to cope with the stressful situation before it occurs. In study one, consideration will be given to the range of coping strategies reported by respondents for different stressful situations. Furthermore the issue of coping effectiveness will be examined, with particular regard to what respondents perceive as effective coping strategies.

2.11 Life satisfaction and coping

The relationship between life satisfaction and coping strategies is such that individuals who report high levels of life satisfaction appraise work and life as less stressful, and therefore use fewer avoidance coping strategies and more problem-focused ones. The avoidance coping strategies were significant indicators of illness, and therefore fewer uses indicate fewer illnesses (Nowack 1991) and higher life satisfaction. There is support from Fleming, Baum and Singer (1984), and from Wright, Lund, Caserta and Pratt (1991), that different types of coping are associated with different levels of life satisfaction. Caregiver respondents who reported using problem-focused coping showed no association with positive outcomes such as reduced burdens and life satisfaction. However, maladaptive coping strategies such as avoidance and the regressive strategies were identified as the most damaging in terms of their association to low life satisfaction and high levels of burden. These results would suggest that although, in this particular sample, problem-focused coping did not relate to life satisfaction, the use of maladaptive coping nonetheless showed a relationship with low life satisfaction. However, the direction of causality is not established.

Although the relationship between life satisfaction and problem-focused coping is less clear, the relationship between life satisfaction and emotion-focused coping is better established. In this regard, lower levels of life satisfaction are linked to emotion-focused coping strategies. It is possible that individuals use problem-focused coping in situations which can be controlled or changed and that this is reflected in higher levels of life satisfaction. Emotion-focused coping is often used in situations which have to be endured and therefore the lower level of reported life satisfaction may reflect, to some extent, the tolerance of uncomfortable situations. Consequently, this thesis examines levels of inter-role conflict in relation to levels of life satisfaction. Also, the relationship between problem-focused, emotion-focused and 'less effective' coping will be examined in relation to high and low life satisfaction.

2.12 Coping with rôle strain

The research on coping strategies used for role strain has presented some interesting findings which show how coping used in one context may be dysfunctional when used in another context. One of the most well known models of coping with work-family conflict is that of Eckenrode and Gore (1990). Their model states that "stress in the work place affects the family and vice versa". The extent of this influence depends upon the "stressors, coping resources and strategies, individual differences, and family and work structures". This model states that effective coping in one role setting may be dysfunctional in another, and the effects of coping in one role might display positive or negative spillover into another. For example, Pearlin and Schooler (1978) found that cognitive disengagement was an effective coping strategy for work-related stressors, whereas it was found to be ineffective for family based stressors. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of certain coping strategies used for role strain, researchers have studied the reduction of subjective distress and focused their attention on the well-being of significant others affected by the stressful situation. For example, some researchers have turned their attention to the well-being of the spouse, co-workers, or children (Pearlin and Schooler 1978; McCubbin, Dahl, Lester, Benson and Robertson 1976). However, one of the main problems of studying any reduction in stress in cross-sectional research, is that it does not show the sequence or long term effects of coping.

Researchers investigating the relationship between role strain and coping have produced mixed findings. Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) found that their sample of college women used 'reactive' coping strategies to manage inter-role conflict between home and non home roles. These coping strategies were perceived to be less successful than active coping strategies. Anderson (1976) found that emotional defensive coping strategies were more likely to be used for intense conflicts than for mild conflicts in his sample of women. One possible explanation was that, during high levels of stress an individual's perceptual field is narrowed to the most obvious cues. Shipley and Coats (1992) found that, in their sample of women who experienced role strain, those who used constructive coping strategies did so by drawing on the support of other women. Those women who had less access to such resources were more vulnerable to the strains imposed by the dual role of

worker and mother. They also found that overall, talking to family members and to friends were the most frequently used coping strategies, whilst alcohol use and irritability with children, followed by smoking, were other methods of coping with role strain.

Coping with role strain is given consideration in study one, where participants are asked to report specific coping strategies for different types of role strains, using the diary method of data collection. In studies two and three, the questionnaire method is used to identify typical coping strategies amongst women who combine multiple roles.

2.13 Personality

There are many definitions of personality which are based on a number of different theoretical perspectives. Despite this diversity, there is general agreement that personality is a psychological construct:

"a complex abstraction that includes the person's unique genetic background ... and learning history and the way in which organised and integrated complexes of events influence his or her response to certain stimuli in the environment".
(Ryckman 1993 p.5).

In other words, personality encompasses those individual differences which might help to account for why people respond in a particular way in specific situations. A number of approaches to personality have been put forward such as psychoanalytic and neoanalytic perspectives. These emphasise concepts which include instincts, ego, defence processes, and psychosexual development. Theorists working within this broad approach include; Freud (1936), Jung (1963), Adler (1927), Horney (1937) and Fromm (1941). The individual approach, otherwise known as humanist or existential, include perspectives and theories from Maslow (1962), Rogers (1951) and May (1950). These approaches emphasise 'growth' within an individual such that she/he is moved towards realisation of their potential. Cognitive perspectives include the work of Kelly (1955) and Bandura (1969), who are concerned with the study of the mental representation of events as well as how we process information in order to act on the environment. Trait approaches express individual differences in terms of traits based on facial features, fluids in the body, body and head size and genetic makeup. Theorists in this tradition include Allport

(1937), Cattell (1950) and Eysenck (1947). This brief list of approaches demonstrate that a wide range of personality theories exist. However, the theoretical approach of particular interest for the current research are those traits which have developed in the 'big five factor' model of personality (McCrae and Costa 1989). These are commonly known as Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to experience (O), Agreeableness (A) and Conscientiousness (C). Although the five factor model dates back over four decades (Fiske 1949; Tupes and Christal 1961), it has only acquired significant renewed academic interest over the last few years. The 'big five' have been found to be congruent with several other personality models including Cattell (1950) and Eysenck (1947) (Deary and Matthews 1993). Certainly the N and E of the big five are very similar by definition to Eysenck's neuroticism and extraversion scales.

Although only the N and E scales are of concern in the current research, a brief outline of all five scales for the sake of completeness is provided. Neuroticism is characterised by anxiety, hostility, depression, self-consciousness and a tendency to worry. Extraversion is characterised by warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness, activity, excitement seeking and positive emotions. Openness to experience is characterised by fantasy, aesthetics, feelings, actions, ideas and values. Agreeableness includes variation in trust, compliance, modesty and tender mindedness. The trait of conscientiousness refers to the ability to defer gratification, persevere in unpleasant tasks, and pay attention to detail. It is also characterised by competence, order and dutifulness, achievement striving, and self-discipline. Both N and E are used in the big five to indicate high scores on these scale. However, low scores on the neuroticism scale indicate 'stability', whereas low scores on extraversion indicate 'introversion'. Stability scores are the extreme end of the neuroticism scale and refer to emotional stability, calmness, even temperaments and relaxation. Introversion scores are at the extreme end of the E scale and are characterised by reserved, independent and quiet individuals. Although introversion is not the opposite of extraversion, it is better thought of as the absence of extraversion (Costa and McCrae 1980).

Both neuroticism and extraversion have their roots in a biological basis. More accurately, extraversion has its roots in the cerebral cortex of the central nervous system whereas neuroticism is linked to the visceral brain or limbic system. Eysenck (1967) proposed that incoming information reaches the brain excitatory and inhibitory cortical processes result in either facilitating or inhibiting responses. Extraverts have 'strong' inhibitory processes and 'weak' excitatory processes. In other words, they have 'strong' nervous systems which means that they have a high capacity to tolerate stimulation. Eysenck also posits that extraverts demonstrate low arousal levels in the cortex as a result of low activity in the ascending reticular activating system. As a result, extraverts need to increase their arousal state, and this is done by optimising stimulation found in the external environment. Alternatively, introverts have 'strong' excitatory processes and 'weak' inhibitory processes and their nervous systems are 'weak' which means that they have a smaller capacity to tolerate stimulation. Therefore, introverts find strong stimulations from the environment aversive to their already over aroused ascending reticular activating system and consequently avoid the extra stimulation.

With neuroticism, biological activity is concentrated in the visceral brain which is involved in generating emotionality. Cortical and automatic arousal can result in activating the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system which prepares the individual for the fight (anger) or flight (fear) response. People with high scores for neuroticism have a lower threshold for activity in the visceral brain and greater responsivity to the sympathetic nervous system. This means that their response is reactive to even mild forms of stimulation. Eysenck proposed that the response of the sympathetic nervous system in individuals high on neuroticism is most pronounced under stressful conditions when the emotional reactions interfere with performance. In stable individuals, the threshold for activity in the visceral brain is not low but 'normal' and therefore the responsivity of the sympathetic nervous system is also normal and not high. Stable individuals therefore do not over-react but react normally to most forms of stimulation.

The emotional demands of extravert and neurotic personalities have been explored by a number of researchers (Tellegen 1988; Watson and Clark 1984; Larsen and Diener 1987). One of the key findings in this area suggests that, common to both extraversion and neuroticism, is the underlying dimension of 'affect'. In neuroticism this has been identified as 'negative affectivity' and in extraversion as 'positive affectivity' (Watson, Clark, McIntyre and Hamaker 1992; Larsen and Ketelaar 1991; Tellegen 1985). Negative affectivity (NA) is often interchangeably used with neuroticism (Clark and Watson 1988) and refers to the tendency to view life pessimistically and cynically. It is associated with low-esteem, sadness, frustration, and distress (Watson et al 1992; Matuzek, Nelson and Quick 1995). Individuals high on NA experience high levels of anxiety which consists of emotionality and worry (Eysenck and Eysenck 1985). Emotionality refers to physiological changes and the accompanying unpleasant feelings of uneasiness, nervousness and tension. Worry is that cognitive component of anxiety which preoccupies the individual with concerns about their performance (Decker and Borgen 1993), about decreased control (Ball, Trevino and Sims 1994) and increases the recall of unpleasant information (Smith and Williams 1992). Although high levels of distress are reported, and recovery from problems is slow (Marco and Suls 1993), there are few associations to illness as measured by objective health indications (Watson and Pennebaker 1989).

Positive affect is associated with extraversion but not neuroticism because extraverts are optimistic, enthusiastic, energetic, friendly, dominant, and cheerful (Berenbaum and Williams (1995). Watson, Clark, McIntyre and Hamaker (1992) suggest that there is a link between positive emotionality and social interpersonal behaviour. Certainly, there is support from Bolger and Eckenrode (1991) that extraversion includes social traits which are similar to dimensions of interpersonal theory. One of these traits is dominance or assertiveness and the other is affiliation or warmth, and both are related to positive affect and interpersonal behaviour. High positive affect is also linked to frequent contact, satisfaction with friends and relatives, making new acquaintances, involvement in social organisation, high self-esteem, and good health (Scheier and Carver 1987; Watson, Clark and Carey 1988).

It would seem that the distinction between positive and negative affect is clear. The former is associated with improved psychological well-being and is underlying the personality dimension of extraversion. The other is associated with high levels of distress and underlies the personality of neuroticism. Both extraversion and neuroticism will be examined in study three, in order to observe their relationship with coping strategies and inter-role conflict.

2.14 Personality and coping

The personality dimensions N and E show very different relationships to coping strategies and this is consistent with much of the research in this field. Neuroticism is often related to maladaptive and 'less effective' coping strategies such as avoidance and self blame (Deary, Blenkin, Agius and Endler (1996); O'Brien and DeLongis (1996). It is also commonly related to emotion-focused coping strategies (Watson and Clark 1984, 1992) rather than problem-focused coping. Houtman and Bakker (1991) proposed that this is because individuals high on neuroticism often perceive stressful situations as insurmountable and uncontrollable. In this regard, emotion-focused coping serves to control distressing emotions and allows the individual to self-regulate (Lazarus 1980). Although individuals high on neuroticism use avoidance coping strategies, they also continue to engage in efforts to resolve difficulties. Bolger and Schilling (1991) found that such individuals increased their use of problem-focused coping which, in turn, increased their anxiety because the problem was being dealt with and was therefore salient. There is also support from Eysenck and Eysenck (1985) that individuals high on neuroticism may perform just as efficiently as those individuals who are low on this scale, but that this is achieved at a greater cost to their physical well-being.

Extraverts, on the other hand, are reported to be using effective and adaptive coping strategies (Costa and McCrae 1990). They prefer problem-focused coping such as direct action and planning, particularly when situations are perceived as controllable (Scheier, Weintraub and Carver 1986). Many stressful situations are perceived as challenges rather than as threats because the extravert is able to rely on a greater social support network and problems are also perceived as manageable because of their optimistic

outlook (Wearing and Hart 1996; Deary, Blenkin, Agius and Endler 1996; O'Brien and Delongis 1996). Furthermore, Hooker, Frazier and Monahan (1994) found a negative relationship between extraversion and emotion-focused coping, particularly 'accepting responsibility'. However, when the situation is perceived as uncontrollable, avoidance coping is preferred over direct coping strategies. However, it is possible that avoidance coping in uncontrollable situations serves to maintain the extraverts high level of optimism (Hobfoll 1988). The relationship between levels of neuroticism and extraversion will be investigated in study three, in order to determine their relationship to problem-focused, emotion-focused and 'less effective' coping strategies.

2.15 Conclusion

In conclusion, a number of different theoretical viewpoints have been considered in relation to women's role involvement. Some of the evidence presented suggests that role involvement is beneficial to women's well-being, whereas other evidence suggests the contrary. Increasingly more women are combining multiple roles and are consequently having to cope with different role demands. Many of these demands are conflicting and lead to role strain. Role demands are coped with according to both the resources available and the preference of the individual. However, despite the increasing number of women who combine several different roles, and the potential interest of this topic to researchers, little is known about how women cope with role demands and the influence of their personalities on their coping. The combination of multiple roles raises many important questions about how the newly acquired roles of 'student' or 'paid worker', combine and interact with the traditional roles of 'spouse' and 'parent'. Where role strain does occur, it is of interest to examine the precise nature of this process and to identify which particular aspects of combining multiple roles might contribute to this experience. The research presented in this thesis will consider the types of role strain individuals experience as well as how they cope, and evaluate their coping strategies. Similarly, consideration is given to the functions of life satisfaction and personality in relation to role strain and coping strategies. It is hoped that by examining these variables, in terms of their interactive effects, a more complete insight into women's experience of multiple role combination will be possible.

CHAPTER THREE

A METHODOLOGICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

"Any good methodology section should confirm an explanation of what was done and how it was done."

(Anderson 1995 p.7).

3.1 Introduction

Psychological research relies on a wide range of methods. This is in part due to the diversity of the discipline, ranging from biological aspects of behaviour to social psychology. It is also due to the nature of the questions the researcher is asking, ranging from basic research questions to problems which arise in applied fields such as clinical, educational or occupational psychology. Different problems call for different research questions and the nature of the questions asked often constrain the methods that can be used to answer it. However, research is not just about answering questions, it is also about generating them. Equally, it is not just about outcomes, it is also specifically related to process. Consequently, the aim of methodology is to help promote a common understanding of both the product, and the process of a scientific enquiry.

This thesis uses both qualitative and quantitative methods of enquiry to generate and refine research questions, provide answers to some problems, and to develop further some of the themes which arise from these answers. For example, the pilot study is an exploratory analysis of role strain and coping which utilised diary data and interview responses to allow a relevant respondent group to report on perceived problems related to the area of research interest. In other words, these particular qualitative methods are being used to refine and develop more specific research questions which are then followed up quantitatively in the later studies. For example, the diary data from the preliminary study identifies inter-role conflict as the most frequently occurring role strain category and this is investigated in more detail later in the thesis using quantitative methods and a more 'traditional' hypothetico-deductive approach. The subsequent investigations into the influences of life satisfaction in role strain and coping, and personality in inter-role conflict and coping strategies, are also largely quantitative. The thesis then returns to a

qualitative approach using the exemplar case studies as a means of providing richer data to enable the development of some of the themes which arise from the quantitative analyses.

This chapter will consider the specific rationales underpinning both the qualitative and quantitative methods used, the use of standard questionnaires and scales, and some relevant issues related to measurement.

3.2 Qualitative Methods

3.2.1 Diaries

Bell (1993) recognises that diaries can provide valuable information about work patterns and activities but emphasises the importance of participants being willing to give up their time to complete them. She emphasises the need for participants to be in sympathy with the work being undertaken because reluctant participants will rarely provide usable data. Diaries generally cover an agreed time span and, in the current research, participants kept daily diaries which they completed retrospectively at the end of each day. These diaries covered behaviour, emotions, and cognitive processes with participants reporting their stressors and coping strategies. As recommended by Burgess (1982), the diaries were used as a preliminary to interviewing in order to assist in determining the right questions to ask. There are several successful precedents for this use of diaries, notably Zimmerman and Wieder (1977), who used diaries in this way for their ethnographic study of the counter-culture in the USA. They see a use for diaries as a preliminary for interviewing to generate and refine interview, and subsequent research questions:

“ the diarist’s statement is used as a way of generating questions for the subsequent diary interview. The diary interview converts the diary - a source of data in its own right - into a question-generating and, hence, data-generating device.”

(Zimmerman and Wieder 1977 p.481).

In any diary exercise there will be problems of representativeness. For example, was this day of the week typical of others or is Friday always the crisis day? As with any

other form of data-collecting, some form of check is often desirable. The subsequent interviews helped serve this purpose as well as eliciting richer, more specific data.

3.2.2 Interviews

Anderson (1995) defines an interview as a specialised form of communication between people for a specific purpose associated with some agreed subject matter. He also regards it as a highly purposeful task which goes beyond mere conversation. There are basically two types of interviews categorised according to purpose. The normative interview is used to collect data which is then classified and analysed statistically. For example, normative interviews include those used in mass surveys by researchers who aim to investigate the views of large numbers of people to fairly straight-forward questions. The elite interview is used for a different purpose where the researcher is not particularly interested in the statistical analysis of a large number of responses but wants to probe the views of a small number of 'elite' individuals. The interviews conducted as part of the research for this thesis served an elite purpose. The nature of some of the questions for the interview in the preliminary study developed from the diary data as described in the previous section. The interviews for the case studies were of the elite type because they were used to probe for more detailed qualitative data in order to provide exemplars for the four design cells used in relation to the life satisfaction questionnaire.

In the preliminary study, participants' interview responses were not statistically analysed but were used to gain more detailed information about combining multiple roles, and in order to identify which measurements might be taken in study two. For example, life satisfaction was identified from the interview content alone and this formed the basis of the quantitative investigation in study two. Interviews can be structured, unstructured, or non-directive. The content of structured interviews is organised in advance and the researcher proceeds to ask the same questions to all participants without modification to style and content. Unstructured interviews allow the researcher the flexibility to control the content, sequence, and wording as appropriate to the research purpose whereas non-directive interviews are most frequently used in the therapeutic context. In the latter type of interview, the interviewer will use minimal direction or

control in order to give the respondent the freedom to express themselves spontaneously. The interview method used in the research for this thesis most closely relates to the unstructured interview. The questions were designed to cover specific aspects of combining multiple roles, and several categories which needed investigation were identified in advance, using diary data and foreshadowed problems from the review of literature. In the pilot study, these included reasons for returning to work and the advantages and disadvantages of combining multiple roles. In addition, consideration was given to the types of role strain experienced, the coping strategies used, role demands, and social support. Participants gave subjective accounts for all of these themes and, in some instances, they provided additional information which they felt was important to their experience of combining multiple roles.

In the second interview with forty three participants, many of the questions asked were determined according to two types of criteria. Firstly, specific pre-determined categories such as coping strategies and life satisfaction were identified as areas that needed more detail investigation. Secondly, questions were also asked according to the participants' questionnaire responses. For example, their responses to the inter-role conflict questionnaire was used to generate further questions for interview. This procedure allowed participants' to clarify their responses, and provide examples which were invaluable in demonstrating their interpretation and understanding of the questionnaire items.

Kvale (1996) suggests that interviews serve three main purposes, all of which have been used to some extent in this thesis. Firstly, interviews may be used as the principal means of gathering information by speaking directly to a person. Secondly, they may be used to test hypotheses or suggest new areas for investigation. Thirdly, they may be used in conjunction with other methods in order to follow up unexpected results or validate other methods. Whilst the interviews in this thesis were not usually the principal means of gathering data they were used in conjunction with the questionnaires to this effect. They were also used as a means of generating and refining hypotheses for studies two and three. The interviews were invaluable in providing a rich source of data which helped

clarify some unexpected results. For example, the finding that there were extremely low levels of inter-role conflict reported between the roles of spouse and parent, when all previous indicators had suggested otherwise. Finally, they enabled a degree of method and data triangulation to take place and, as such, they were helpful in validating some of the other methods used.

3.2.3 Case Study

Bromley (1986) regards the individual case study or situation analysis as the "bedrock of scientific investigation". The case study method, when applied rigorously can lead to the generation of immensely rich qualitative data. Case studies allow for detailed investigation of the person in a situation or situations and often involve a reconstruction and interpretation of a segment of an individual life story. Case study research is highly data based and strives for the same degree of reliability and validity as any good research. Case studies deal with contemporary events and are concerned with how things happen and why. Yin (1994) defines case study research as empirical inquiry which investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when:

- a) the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident;
- b) multiple sources of evidence are used.

Case studies often involve the selection of a single subject or subjects for detailed investigation which concentrates on specific factors. In the current research, the case studies have been selected as single exemplars representative of each of the four design cells, high versus low life satisfaction, and student versus worker role. A segment of each individual's life is examined to elaborate on the quantitative analysis investigated in the study on life satisfaction, role strain and coping. The use of the case study method also provides an opportunity for method triangulation because it confirms much of the data obtained through the quantitative study as well as developing richer explanations and further potential research questions. Bromley (1986) refers to this particular method as 'quasi-judicial' because it embodies a theory about how and why a person behaved as he or she did in a particular situation.

This method requires that the main issues be stated clearly from the very beginning. There should be sufficient empirical data to support or refute any decisions. Evidence should be admissible, relevant and rational, and conclusions which have important practical implications should be backed up by a greater weight of evidence than conclusions of lesser significance. Bromley also outlines the growing popularity of case studies in areas of education, law, social work, and crime. The case comprises of specific events and relationships which are described, analysed, interpreted and evaluated within a framework of ideas and procedures appropriate for the type of case, and the particular discipline.

Although these events are not experimentally contrived, they are nevertheless subject to rigorous analytic procedures that ensure correct referencing to appropriate evidence and reasoning (Moon, Dillon and Sprenkle 1991). The nature of the case study determines the selection of material so that only those aspects which are relevant to the issue being studied constitute evidence. An additional check to ensure against total subjectivity is to preserve the 'confirmability trail' through preserving interview formats and transcriptions. This ensures that checks can be made later if required (Yin 1994; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen 1993). Another way to evaluate the case study is for the researcher to keep reflexive accounts of the research process, (Stevenson and Cooper 1997).

3.3 Quantitative Scales and Measures

3.3.1 Validity

Construct validity is established through a process of gradually accumulating information from a variety of sources about a construct and the conditions which may have influenced its development and manifestations (Anastasi 1988). Construct validation relies on sound evidence that the internal factor structure of a measure is consistent and stable. For example, measures of Extraversion should positively correlate with sociability and activity but not with worry. Also, it is important that the measure has adequate convergent validity with measures of the construct. Convergent validity is where several

measures should agree. For example, a high life satisfaction score should correlate positively with the use of effective coping strategies. It should also be possible to demonstrate that the chosen measure is related to theoretically important external criteria, although sometimes measures can be statistically created and then theoretically tested, as was the case with the COPE questionnaire. All of the measures used in the current research satisfy these validity criteria which are generally provided in the manuals on the questionnaires, or by researchers who have previously used these questionnaires.

3.3.2 Reliability

"Internal consistency and test -retest reliability are the most commonly used indices of the reliability of tests and measures."

(Costa and McCrae 1992 p.44).

Internal consistency is calculated as Cronbach's coefficient alpha. This is the degree to which items on a scale measure the same thing. Individual questionnaire items measure small aspects, which are summed in order to provide a reliable measure. For example, the life satisfaction questionnaire (Lindley 1987) measures four distinct categories; life style, personal life and standards and achievements. The sum of these categories provide a reliable measure of total satisfaction with life. If all items in each category measure the same thing, they should all be correlated with each other. This is evident, for example, in the inter-role conflict questionnaire (Holahan and Gilbert 1979), scale measuring conflict between the 'worker' and 'parent' roles. The questionnaire items in this scale are all highly correlated with each other. Carver, Scheier and Weintraub (1989) provide "acceptably high" internal consistency for their coping inventory, which was computed for each scale. Costa and McCrae (1992) provide high Internal consistency for the individual facet scales, both in self-report and in observer ratings.

Test-retest reliability refers to the extent to which the test produces stable scores, and therefore the extent to which respondents approximate the same scores on two different occasions. Costa and McCrae report high test-retest reliability for the personality

inventory, assessed by self report or by the ratings of spouse or peers. Likewise, Lindley (1987); Carver et al (1989) and Holahan and Gilbert (1979) report 'good' and 'acceptable' test-retest reliability. All measures used in the current research satisfy both internal consistency and test-retest reliability. These are provided in the manuals on the questionnaires or by researchers who have used them.

3.3.1 Scales and Measures

The Cope questionnaire (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989) was used in this research to identify preferred methods of coping with life stressors. The Cope was derived theoretically from a belief that coping is a stable preference rather than an exclusively situational response. One of the dilemmas involved in 'measuring' and defining coping responses is the recognition that there are two major ways of thinking about how individuals cope. On the one hand there are stable coping 'styles' or 'dispositions' which individuals bring with them to stressful situations. On the other hand, there is the view that individuals cope according to the situation they find themselves in. Given these considerations, Carver et. al. (1989) ensured that they included only those questionnaire items that could be answered from both orientations. Consequently, the Cope questionnaire was chosen for use in this research because it is capable of examining both stable coping dispositions and situation specific coping. Full details of the three distinct categories, and the five subsections of each of these, are given in study two so will not be duplicated here.

The Cope was also chosen because it was standardised on a large sample (N=978) of participants and it shows a high level of internal consistency across and between factors. Indeed, the factor structure offered by Carver et. al. (1989) was replicated by Clark, Bormann, Cropanzano and James (1995) who confirmed that these showed high discriminate and convergent validity (see Bryman 1989; Campbell and Fiske 1959 for a full discussion of the various types of convergent and discriminant validity). Alternatives to the Cope considered for use in this research included The Coping Strategy Indicator (Amirkhan 1990), and the Ways of Coping-Revised (Folkman and Lazarus 1985), but were rejected in favour of the Cope questionnaire. The Cope takes a slightly different

approach to the other questionnaires by asking people to indicate their coping strategies in general, whereas the Coping Strategy Indicator (CSI), and the Ways of Coping-Revised (WOC-R), request that respondents rate a specific stressful event. Given the nature and focus of this research, the Cope was clearly the more suitable instrument because of the capacity to take both stable coping dispositions and situation specific coping into account.

The Life Satisfaction questionnaire selected for use in this research was developed by Lindley (1987). It was standardised using a sample of 488 adults and Lindley provides evidence of high internal consistency, reliability, and validity. The questionnaire consists of fourteen items scored on a 6 point Likert scale, where a score of 1 indicates very dissatisfied and a score of 6 indicates very satisfied. Life satisfaction is scored in the areas of 'life style' (4 items), 'personal life' (5 items) and 'standards and achievements' (5 items). A total life satisfaction score is obtained from combining all items. This test was chosen because of its simplicity and reliability. It is in current use by a number of companies in the field of applied occupational psychology (e.g. Newland Park Associates Limited). In the current research, it was used as a measure of life satisfaction to investigate the relationship between life satisfaction, coping strategies and inter-role conflict. Four design cells were then created around high versus low life satisfaction and worker versus student for the exemplar qualitative case study analysis referred to earlier. From 80 participants, 'high' and 'low' life satisfaction groups were created by assigning those participants whose scores were in excess of the median (54) into a 'high' life satisfaction group. There were 41 participants in this group. Participants were allocated to the 'low' life satisfaction group if their scores were 54 or under and 39 participants were in this group.

The Neo or NEOAC five-factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa and McCrae 1989), is a 60-item personality inventory consisting of five 12-item scales that measure each of five personality domains. Responses are coded using a 4 point Likert scale, where 0 represents 'strongly disagree' to 4 representing 'strongly agree.' It is a version of the NEO-PI used to assess Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. This scale has been previously used in military populations and

has demonstrable reliability (Marshall, Wortman, Vickers, Kusulan, and Hervig, 1991). Correlations between the NEO-FFI and NEO-PI are as high as .92 and there is clear evidence of both convergent and discriminant validity (Costa and McCrae 1992). Full details are also presented in Costa and McCrae's (1989) manual. For the purpose of study three only, the scores from two personality scales were used in order to focus upon their relationship to inter-role conflict and coping strategies. These were Extraversion (E) and Neuroticism (N).

A 34 item Inter-role Conflict scale was used to measure conflict between pairs of roles such as the roles of 'worker', 'self', 'spouse' and 'parent'. This scale measures Inter-role conflict on a 5 point scale which ranges from 'causes no internal conflict' (1) to 'high internal conflict' (5). Correlations amongst the scale range from .22 to .64, with a median intercorrelation of .44. Holahan and Gilbert (1979) provide means and standard deviations for their sample of women using the inter-role conflict scale. They also provide reliability and validity information and demonstrate high levels of internal consistency between questionnaire items. Greenglass, Pantory & Burke (1988) used Holahan and Gilbert's questionnaire to assess sex differences in inter-role conflict amongst teachers. They found means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha that were similar to Holahan and Gilbert. Consequently, this scale was considered most appropriate for this study because of its high levels of reliability and validity as well as the relatively straightforward method of administration.

3.4 Quantitative Research Designs

3.4.1 Experimental Designs

Several research designs are used including independent samples, matched pairs, and repeated measures. With independent samples design, participants are not usually matched in order to control variables which might have an influence on outcome measures. Instead, participants are randomly allocated to groups which then receive different levels of the independent variable. In matched pairs design some effort is made to match participants on specific variables such as age, gender, intelligence which might affect the outcome. With repeated measures design, the same participants appear in two or

more conditions, and act as their own control for many variables which might influence the outcome. Mixed designs combine features of independent and repeated measures designs, and involve the use of repeated measures within two or more independent groups.

A variant of the independent groups design was used in study two, hypothesis three, where participants were not randomly allocated into 'high' and 'low' groups, but were systematically selected according to their life satisfaction scores in order to give two extreme or contrasting groups. Those scoring above the median were allocated into the 'high' life satisfaction group, and those scoring below the median were allocated into the 'low' life satisfaction group. This 'extreme groups' method facilitates the detection of effects due to different levels of life satisfaction as the 'independent variable' or between subject factor. Role combination is the within subject factor, with inter-role conflict between six pairs of roles as the 'dependent variable'. This mixed design ANOVA technique is specifically known as profile analysis (e.g. Tabachnick and Fidell 1989).

In study three the 'extreme groups' method was used again, and participants were allocated into 'high' and 'low' scoring neuroticism groups. Those with scores above the mean were assigned to the 'high' neuroticism groups and those scoring below the mean were allocated to the 'low' neuroticism group. The same procedure was used in creating 'high' and 'low' extraversion groups. Subsequently, when testing hypotheses about the within subjects factors of inter-role conflict and coping, participants act as their own controls. For example, in study three, hypothesis 3b was tested using profile analysis in a mixed design ANOVA. The 'independent variable' or between subject factor consisted of level of neuroticism, i.e. 'high' or 'low'. Coping was a within subject factor, with mean coping scores as the 'dependent variable'. By using this particular method, it was possible to evaluate the effects of differing levels of neuroticism on preferred coping strategies.

3.4.2 Correlational Designs

Correlational designs are ordinarily used in psychology to observe the relationship or the association between two or more variables to arrive at structural descriptions (e.g. personality traits or facets of intelligence). Another use of correlation is to impute or

imply causation. However, it has been acknowledged that this latter use is problematic given the possible influence of extraneous variables and the difficulty in determining the direction of any causal influence. In study three, hypothesis 3a, an association between neuroticism and choice of coping strategies was observed, and this could be said to support the view that the stable, dispositional trait of neuroticism influences the choice of coping strategy. Although other factors might also influence the relationship between neuroticism and coping strategies, the direction of the influence is well established by extensive research, suggesting that personality influences coping strategies (Costa and McCrae 1987).

3.5 Statistical Evaluation

3.5.1 Correlation

Correlational research involves calculations of a correlation coefficient, which is the measure of the extent to which variables vary in the same way. Correlation coefficients range from -1.0 to + 1.0 with 0 indicating that there is no relationship between the variables, and 1.0 indicating a perfect relationship. A positive correlation is evident when a high score on one variable is associated with a high score on the other. A negative correlation is evident when a high score on one variable is related to a low score on the other. What is often overlooked by many researchers is that the square of the correlation is more important than its absolute value or its significance (which is determined by value and the sample size) because this figure indicates the proportion of variance held in common between two variables. For example, in study three, a Pearson's Product Moment correlation shows neuroticism to be negatively correlated with problem-focused coping at -.708. Although this is a highly significant correlation, the square of the correlation indicates a common variance of 50%. In other words 50% of the variance is explained by the negative relationship between neuroticism and problem-focused coping whereas the remaining 50% is due to 'other' factors. To further illustrate this point, with a large sample of say 500, a correlation as low as 0.073 would be significant at the 0.05 level (one-tailed), although the percentage of shared variance would be less than 1%. Correlational analysis is used in this research to look at the relationship between the three major categories of coping and the personality factors extraversion (E), and

neuroticism (N). This use of correlational analysis allows the research to progressively focus on the potential relationship between each of two important personality factors, and coping as measured by the Cope questionnaire.

3.5.2 Inferential Statistics

These tests are based upon probability theory and are used to test hypotheses in the hypothetico-deductive tradition. They test whether descriptive results are likely to be due to random factors or real relationships. A standard level of significance, usually at $p < 0.05$, is adopted in order to identify whether or not results are due to real relationships or simply likely to be a result of chance factors. A 'type 1' error occurs when researchers accept that an effect exists when one does not, thereby falsely rejecting the null hypothesis that the results are due to chance. A 'type 2' error occurs when a researcher accepts that an effect does not exist when in fact it does, thereby falsely accepting the null hypothesis. As the odds of making one type of error decrease, the odds of making the other increase. Therefore, the probability level (p) of $p < .05$ (the 5% level) is a compromise between type 1 and type 2 errors. Effectively, it means that any effects measured are only likely to have occurred by chance less than five times in a hundred. This is the generally acceptable level for psychological research of the type undertaken in this thesis and has been adopted as the minimum standard or level of acceptance in the current research.

Univariate, bivariate and multivariate statistics need some brief consideration in relation to this thesis. Univariate analysis involves a single dependent variable although there may be more than one independent variable. A one way analysis of variance is the prime example of univariate statistics. In study two, hypothesis one was tested using univariate analysis. The three levels of the single independent variable were a high, medium and low role demand groups and the dependent variable was the life satisfaction score. Bivariate statistical analysis involves two variables where neither is an independent or dependent variable. The desire is to study the relationship between the variables. An example of this type of analysis is the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient which was used to examine the relationship between extraversion and coping strategies, and

neuroticism and coping strategies, in study three. Multivariate statistical analysis essentially involves multiple dependent and can sometimes also involve multiple independent variables. Multiple dependent variables are often measured on the same scale. It can also be used as an alternative to univariate repeated measures ANOVA where a single variable is measured on several occasions for a group of participants.

An ANOVA is used when two or more means are compared to see if there are any reliable differences among them. ANOVA is based on a comparison of the extent to which two estimates differ. One estimate comes from differences using scores within each group - called random or error variance. The second estimate comes from differences in group means and is considered a reflection of group differences or treatment effects plus error. If the estimates are different, it implies that they were drawn from different sampling distributions of means and the null hypothesis that the means are the same is rejected. Differences in variance are evaluated as ratios and the variance associated with difference among sample means is called the numerator. The variance associated with error is called the denominator. It is the ratio between these two levels of variance (numerator and denominator) which forms the 'F' distribution. F distributions vary according to the degrees of freedom in both the numerator and denominator of the F ratio (Critical F depends on 2 sets of degrees of freedom, for this reason). A sums of Square (SS) is the numerator of a variance, S. This is the sum of squared differences between scores and their means.

In cases where measures of commensurable variables (measured on the same scales) are derived, (often repeated measures situations) a standard procedure is to partition the overall variability in the data into a component which is due to variations within the group. In study two a mixed design ANOVA, with life satisfaction as a between subjects factor, type of role combination as a within subjects factor and inter-role conflict as the dependent variable is used to test hypothesis three.

3.5.3 Profile analysis of repeated measures

Profile analysis is an application of analysis of variance (ANOVA), where several dependent variables (called segments) are measured on the same scale for two or more groups of individuals. It answers the question of whether or not profiles of groups differ over a set of measures and can be approached univariately, multivariately or by a combination of the two (e.g. Tabachnick and Fidell 1989, p442-449). For example, several sources of inter-role conflict in study two (hypothesis three) were measured in high and low life satisfaction groups. In study three, (hypothesis 1a) the profiles of inter-role conflict between six role combinations (dependent variable) are measured on the same scale for high and low neuroticism groups (independent variable). Profile analysis is useful here because the groups were measured on more than one scale. These scales correspond to 'segments' in profile analysis, and must have the same scale characteristics, as in this analysis. Profile analysis answers the question of whether or not profiles of groups differ over a set of scales.

3.5.3.1 Parallelism of Profiles

The primary question addressed by profile analysis is whether different groups have parallel profiles. Whether or not the groups produce parallel profiles is normally tested by examining the different scores for the segments with a one-way MANOVA. It can also be evaluated via the within subjects factor corresponding to the segments in a Multivariate repeated measures MANOVA. However, some authors (e.g. Tabachnick and Fidell 1989, p.449) use the univariate test of interaction for the between and within subject factors in repeated measures ANOVA, as the test of parallelism and this is the approach adopted here in study two and three. In testing hypothesis three from study two, the results show that the dependent variable (inter-role conflict) did not elicit the same average response in the two groups relative to the other dependent variables. Therefore, it can be said that the profiles of the high and low life satisfaction groups are not parallel.

3.5.3.2 Flatness

Flatness refers to whether each of the scores or segments has the same mean, and is not a relevant consideration in the profile analysis conducted here. However, for completeness sake, the F-statistic for this, derived from the within subject effect of repeated measures ANOVA is included in the tables.

3.6 Conclusion

In the introduction to this chapter, reference was made to the comparison between qualitative and quantitative research and the need to identify both outcomes and process. In general, psychology has tended to adopt a positivist stance which has emphasised the use of quantitative measures. According to Stevenson and Cooper (1997) the problem with this approach is that positivism entails a narrow definition of good science which can serve to distance the researcher from the researched. The emergence of more qualitative, constructivist approaches, suggesting that knowledge is socially constructed, has encouraged academic and practitioner debate within the discipline (Moon, Dillon and Sprenkle 1991; Morgan 1996). However, constructivist research also has its problems suggesting that all accounts of the world are equally good and that all research positions are equally good. Clearly, with this approach, the definition of 'knowledge' becomes more fluid.

The approach taken to research in this thesis is based on the view that neither positivist nor constructivist research are better than each other. Instead, they represent different inquiry positions which are associated with different kinds of questions and different kinds of knowledge. As Sherrard (1997) points out, the interpretative aspect of experimental reports is often under emphasised which can give the impression that results somehow speak for themselves. This can lead to a reluctance to give a verbal account of the results or to draw substantive conclusions. In contrast, qualitative research openly seeks interpretations rather than facts but, in so doing, creates an obligation to support and test these views of the world. Consequently, both broad approaches are valued and used in this thesis to complement each other in terms of both the process of the research inquiry, and the outcomes.

In the pilot study, diary and interview data are used to investigate some foreshadowed problems in relation to the researchers interest. In other words, the areas of inter-role conflict, role demand, coping and multiple roles are considered from the 'world views' given by the women participants. Their responses to the qualitative data gathering helped determine which hypotheses would then be most appropriate, and interesting, to follow up using quantitative analysis in studies two and three. The major themes to emerge involved role strain, coping, personality influences, and inter-role conflict. These were tested using the quantitative measures identified in this chapter, and then two particular areas, life satisfaction and inter-role conflict, was subjected to qualitative case study analysis. This provided an opportunity for data and method triangulation which largely confirmed the quantitative findings, but also allowed for more rigorous interpretation and the development of further research questions.

In practical research of the kind undertaken in this thesis, such a combination of positivist and constructivist approaches is essential to ensure that it is acknowledged that inferences should reflect the varying experiences of the participant groups rather than just the researcher. By progressively focusing on research problems initially identified by the participants, and then testing these quantitatively, returning later to an illustrative qualitative approach, this thesis has made the process of inquiry as explicit as the outcomes.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDY ONE: PILOT

4.1 Summary

The present study constitutes a preliminary investigation of role strain and coping. Data is collected from 15 women who combine multiple roles using diary and interview methods. Four role strain categories are determined, inter-role conflict, role overload, general role strain and financial role strain. Results suggest that there are no differences in terms of perceived stressfulness between the four categories of role strain. The most frequently occurring type of role strain is inter-role conflict followed by role overload. Participants also report coping for specific incidents of role strain (actual coping) and coping effectiveness. Both the behavioural and the superwoman coping strategies are rated as the most effective for all types of role strain. Moreover, participants identified the type of coping strategy which would have been preferred with the benefit of hindsight (ideal coping), had there been a choice. Coping used with the benefit of hindsight suggests that much of the time women do not actually have much choice in determining which coping strategy they employ. Interview data and reports on coping strategies suggest that many women are combining multiple roles with very little social support. The implications of these findings are discussed.

4.2 Introduction

An increasing number of women are resuming employment after childbirth, and many are acquiring the new responsibilities associated with the role of 'paid worker' as well as retaining those responsibilities associated with the traditional roles of 'mother' and 'wife'. As more women are combining multiple roles in this way, research has increasingly focused on the effects of work-related stress (Cooper and Payne 1988) and, in particular, the effects of stress on health and well-being (Barnett and Baruch 1985; Thoits 1992; Cohen and Wills 1985; Salovey & Rodin 1986). In returning to paid work, women are likely to encounter new demands from their paid work role in addition to those which come from their family roles (McBride, 1990). These role demands require

commitment, time and energy and, although they bring some rewards (such as improved financial circumstances, higher self esteem, greater life satisfaction and increased psychological well-being, Facione 1994), they can also result in role strain.

Role strains are not life threatening or traumatic unlike the more idiosyncratic life events which can occur unexpectedly and with sudden impact, for example, the death of a loved one. They are nevertheless stressful because they persist, are slow to dissipate, and maintain a stable presence in peoples lives (Pearlin 1989). Recent research has investigated some of the many different types of role strain that occur within and between roles (Moen and Dempster-McClain 1987; Pleck 1985; Barnett and Baruch 1985; Kelloway and Barling 1990). The effects of stress in one role may exacerbate the effects of stress in other roles (Barnett, Marshall and Sayer 1991). This phenomenon is a common occurrence for women who experience inter-role conflict and role overload. Both are types of role strain, although more specifically, inter-role conflict is a type of role conflict which is:

*"the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other" .
(Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal 1964 p.19).*

The above concept incorporates a number of different conflicts which are reviewed in more detail in chapter two. However, inter-role conflict, according to Baruch and Barnett (1987) arises when the demands from two or more roles are such that adequate performance of one role jeopardises adequate performance of the other(s). The emphasis here is on the incompatibility or mismatch of roles. For example, in combining multiple roles, women are sometimes faced with the conflict of staying at home with a sick child, as part of their parental role, whilst also being required to attend work as part of their paid employee role.

Role overload is defined as fulfilling several different roles simultaneously which consequently leads to too many role demands and insufficient time to meet the requirements of each role (Baruch and Barnett 1987). Role overload emphasises 'time limitations' and this has been linked to womens' experience of combining multiple roles

in terms of what has been called the 'second shift' (Hochschild 1989). This is the idea that women complete a full day at their place of employment and return home to start a full evening's work of family-related tasks. A review of the literature on women combining multiple roles shows a wide range of different findings. On the one hand, multiple roles are seen to bring benefits which contribute to increased psychological well-being (Thoits 1992; Lewin-Epstein 1989; Repetti 1988; Waldron and Jacobs, 1989; Buller 1994). On the other hand any benefits gained from combining multiple roles may be off-set by the effects of inter-role conflict and role overload (Pleck 1985; Kelloway & Barling 1990). In turn, this can result in increased distress, dissatisfaction, and possible negative effects on health and psychological well-being. Furthermore Facione (1994) argued that women adopt a pattern of self neglect in their personal health and well-being in order to successfully combine multiple roles. Within these two perspectives, a range of often contradictory results are presented. For example, studies comparing employed and non-employed women have suggested that employed women enjoy better mental health than non-employed women (La Rosa 1988). This is in marked contrast to the findings of Walker and Best (1991) who identified full time employed mothers as being more distressed than non-employed mothers. Parry (1987) found advantages in terms of well-being for unemployed mothers when compared with working mothers of young children. Furthermore Kandal, Davies and Ravies (1985) reported that levels of depressive symptoms were the lowest for those women who combined the highest number of roles. Yet Theorell (1991) reported increases in the incidence of illness for women who combined family and paid work roles when compared with men. Whilst these measures provide some insight into research on combining multiple roles, there is still an absence of information about women's personal experience in this regard. Experiences of combining multiple roles are usually classified as being either positive or negative and, where role strain is evident, there is a tendency to categorise the experience as being stressful without any attempt to gauge just how stressful it actually is. Similarly, the experience of role strain is often seen as generally stressful, but particular types of role strain are not isolated and investigated to see if they are identified as being more or less stress provoking than others. The present study is a preliminary investigation into some

specific incidents of stress involved in combining multiple roles. It aims to identify the extent to which each reported incident is actually perceived to be stressful.

The effect and persistence of role strain is very much determined by the type of coping strategies employed. Reference to coping in this context refers to efforts at controlling or reducing role strain. It incorporates both cognitive and behavioural efforts, but not necessarily those which are purposeful and predetermined or those that are indicative of a defensive process. Eckenrode and Gore (1990) proposed a working model of work and family role domains, where both stress and coping in one domain transfer to another domain, and where successful coping in one domain does not have the same desired effects in another domain. This model identifies a process whereby stress and coping which crosses domains may have either positive or negative effects on well-being. Problem-focused coping (which is concerned with tackling the source of stress) is often associated with more favourable outcomes than is emotion-focused coping (which is concerned with managing the disphoric emotions produced by the stress). However, this distinction is not entirely clear (Bolger 1990) and there are times when some stressful situations have to be endured and therefore emotion-focused coping is often employed (Carver and Scheier 1994). The success of either coping strategy can be gauged by measuring its effectiveness and this is usually done by recording levels of distress. This has produced mixed findings. Felton and Revenson (1984) have found that problem-focused coping increases and emotion-focused coping decreases distress. However, Baum, Gatchel and Schaeffer (1984) have reported the opposite. To further complicate the picture, the notions of 'successful coping' or 'effectiveness of coping' are often interchangeably used with 'coping efficacy' (Thoits 1994). Therefore, for the purpose of the current study a distinction between coping efficacy and coping effectiveness will not be made, and coping effectiveness will be operationally defined as the respondents subjective evaluation of how successful a coping strategy is. In other words, the respondents own criteria are used for evaluation.

Studies of coping with role strain have produced mixed results. Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) found that 'reactive' (emotional) coping was used for inter-role conflict between

home and non-home roles, and this is considered to be less effective than 'active' (direct) coping. Shipley and Coats (1992) found that social support was an approach used by women with dual role strain and that they coped much better than women who did not employ this approach. Less effective coping includes alcohol use, smoking, and irritability with children. Women who combine multiple roles also tend to make use of a mixture of both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping for work and family role demands (Emmons, Biernat, Tiedje, Lange and Wortman 1990). Their sample of women used four specific coping strategies for role strain. These include 'superwoman', 'time management', 'cognitive interpretation' and 'divesting oneself of unimportant activities and extra responsibilities'. The superwoman coping strategy has also been identified by Llewelyn and Osbourne (1990) as the 'superwoman ideal', which refers to those women who attempt to run a home whilst working full time. It would seem that a wider usage of coping allows for more flexibility and choice. Indeed, given that coping is a dynamic process, a fixed coping style would not be beneficial in changing appraisals of a stressful transaction (Folkman and Lazarus 1986).

4.3 Aims of the Study

Several studies to date suggest that women who combine multiple roles experience role strain (Rosenfield 1989; Pleck 1985; McBride 1990). However, research does not specify which particular types of role strain occur most frequently. Studies often assume that all types of role strain are equally stressful, although this has not actually been tested. Given that stress and coping is a dynamic process involving changing appraisals, where stress and coping are interactive, specific types of role strain could be perceived as differentially stressful because individuals may have the resources to deal more effectively with some types of role strains and not others. However, it is possible that the occurrence of any type of role strain has the effect of overshadowing all other role strains, in which case there would be no difference in the perception of their stressfulness. Little research has been undertaken in this area and, for this reason the following two research questions will be addressed:

- 1) Which type of role strain is reported to occur most frequently?*
- 2) Are some types of role strain perceived to be more stressful than others?*

Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) refer to two broad coping strategies used for inter-role conflict. These are called 'reactive' and 'active' coping. 'Reactive' coping refers to emotional responses, whereas 'active' coping refers to direct, problem-solving action. Others (Emmons et al 1990; Shipley and Coates 1992) have identified general coping strategies, used for role strain, which they classify as being 'better' or 'worse'. The current study will readdress this area in order to identify those specific coping strategies which are used for different types of role strain, and to evaluate their effectiveness according to reports provided by participants in this study. As a consequence, two further research questions are proposed:

- 3) Which particular types of coping strategies are associated with particular types of role strain?*
- 4) How effective are the coping strategies used for particular types of role strain?*

Finally, research on coping with role strain and its effectiveness has concentrated on coping strategies used contemporaneously with the effects being evaluated only in the short term. The current study also investigates whether participants would have preferred to used a different coping strategy given the benefit of hindsight. The following research question is addressed:

- 5) Which type of coping strategy is preferred with the benefit of hindsight?*

4.4 Method

4.4.1 Participants

Twenty three married women who had returned to full time employment after taking time off for family responsibilities participated in this study. However, several of the returned diaries were incomplete, were returned too late to be of use, or the participant was unavailable for interview. Therefore the final sample consisted of 15 participants (mean age 30.4 years). The range of time the participant had been back at work varied from three and a half months to two years. Participants, drawn from Plymouth, were contacted through their various employment organisations which included banks, building societies, departmental stores, nursing homes, schools and various offices. The management concerned either agreed to set up a meeting with participants or they passed on their names, in which case direct contact was made. Demographic data was initially collected in order to identify the approximate sample (appendix 1).

4.4.2 Research instrument

A diary marked for each day of the week from Monday to Sunday was given to each participant to complete at the end of each day (appendix 2). The diary method is a very powerful tool for collecting data on subjective responses to a series of questions. It allows sufficient flexibility for participants to respond in their own words whilst maintaining a structured format which addresses specific questions. These were:

- 1) What caused you stress and why?
- 2) How stressful was it on a scale of 1.....10?
- 3) What did you do in order to cope with it?
- 4) How effectively did you cope 1.....10?
- 5) What should you have done as well and /or instead?

Participants were given free choice as to what they defined as 'stress' and 'coping' in their diaries and were asked to report as many stressful events and the ways in which they coped with these events, as they wished. However, given the arduous nature of accurately keeping a diary, subjects agreed before-hand to report one main stressful

encounter and one main attempt at coping per day. Analogue scales were employed to measure how stressful an incident was and how effective a coping strategy was, with respondents marking the line with a numerical value between 1 and 10. In conjunction with the diary, a semi-structured interview was conducted with each of the 15 participants. Interviews aimed to cover themes including returning to work, reasons for working, difficulties in combining multiple roles, coping with role strain, role demands and social support.

4.4.3 Procedure

During the initial contact participants were given an outline of the research, and the importance of their co-operation was emphasised, although the latter proved unnecessary because the majority were very keen to participate in the study. As mentioned above, participants were asked to keep a diary for one week which they filled in at the end of each day (appendix 2). When these were complete, interviews were arranged with each participant which were conducted at the place of employment and which lasted approximately 20 minutes. All participants were informed that their interview would be taped and were asked if they had any objections. None of the women objected.

Two independent people rated the various categories of 'role strain', 'actual coping' and 'ideal coping' for all diaries over the week. Inter-rater reliability between person A and the researcher and person B and the researcher shows a large and statistically significant result using Cramer's V test.

	Role strain	Actual coping	Ideal coping
Person A	.880	.720	.791
Person B	.820	.810	.830

Table 4.1: Cramer's V; agreement between researcher and person A and researcher and person B, rating diaries into the categories of 'role strain', 'actual coping' and 'ideal coping'.

Table 4.1 suggests that there was a high degree of agreement between the two people and the researcher when rating the diary responses.

Participants reported incidents of stress for every day of the week and these were categorised into one of the four types of role strain; 'inter-role conflict', 'role overload', 'financial', and 'general' strain. Participants also reported how they coped with reported incidents of stress and these were also placed into one of five coping strategies; 'emotional', 'behavioural', 'superwoman', 'seeking assistance', 'reasoning' and 'other'. Where participants reported coping with the benefit of hindsight, two further categories; 'no choice' and 'planning' were available to code responses as well as the five mentioned above. Definitions of all categories, with examples of the types of responses made by participants in their diary entries, are provided below.

4.4.4 Role Strain Categories

4.4.4.1 Inter-role conflict

Inter-role conflict consists of incompatible demands or the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures, such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult (Kahn et al 1964). The general category of inter-role conflict is defined as having to be in two or more places at the same time, or having to do two or more things at the same time, such that the demands are conflicting. Examples of statements reported by the participant include:

1. "The child is ill and I have to go to work".
2. "Working late, when I'm expected to be at the theatre".
3. "The child wants attention when I have to complete a project".
4. "Husband wants help in the garden when there is work to do".
5. "I'm working, but my child has a dentist appointment".

4.4.4.2 Role overload

Role overload refers to fulfilling several different roles, which leads to too many role demands and insufficient time to meet the requirements of each role. The emphasis is on time limit (Kelly & Voydanoff 1985). Examples of typical statements reported by the participants include:

1. "The usual rush in the morning".

2. "Having to rush around doing everything".
3. "Weekly chores, no time to relax".
4. "Traffic jams, pick up children, meals, bath children, work.. bed".
5. "Too much to do at work".

4.4.4.3 Financial role strain

This refers to specific problems related to financial worries and pressures. For example, typical statements included:

1. "Worried that my husband hadn't returned the video player so we would have to pay for another months rental".
2. "The cost of the car repair".
3. "Bills".

4.4.4.4 General role strain

This category incorporates stressful incidents that could not be clearly placed in either of the above categories, but were nevertheless reported as stressful. Statements included:

1. "I cooked a meal but the family didn't like it".
2. "Shopping with my teenage daughter".
3. "Official meeting at work".
4. "Traffic jams".

4.4.5 Stress Scale

The amount of stress experienced was measured by an analogue scale beginning at 1 and ending at 10 with no numbers in between. A notch on the line indicated the stressfulness of the event, so that 1 indicated little stress and 10 was indicative of a lot of stress.

4.4.6 Coping with role strain

With regards to coping (actual coping), five main coping strategies were identified. These were 'emotional', 'behavioural', 'superwoman', 'seeking assistance', 'reasoning' and 'other'. For 'ideal' coping strategies there were eight clear categories, five of which were the same as actual coping, with an additional two, 'having no choice' and 'planning'. Below are all eight coping categories:

4.4.6.1 Emotional coping

This category was predominately concerned with emotional outlet and expression. It was not intended to be the same as the emotion-focused coping categories used by Folkman and Lazarus (1980). However, some of the examples from respondents would suggest some similarity between the two concepts. Some examples are given below:

1. "Crying".
2. "Shouting at the family".
3. "I upset myself".
4. "I panicked".

4.4.6.2 Behavioural Coping

Behavioural coping is concerned with those active and practical aspects of coping which achieve results rather than the management of emotions as above. Below are several examples which include statements like:

1. "I rang them and sorted it out".
2. "I organised it during my lunch break".
3. "I gave the family a big sweet to fill them up".
4. "I borrowed a loaf of bread from the neighbours instead".

4.4.6.3 Superwoman Coping

The 'Superwoman Syndrome' is characteristic of women who take on everything themselves without any help or assistance and examples include statements like:

1. "I did it myself".
2. "I missed out on lunch instead".
3. "I worked during my day off, to catch up".
4. "I just did it for him".

4.4.6.4 Seeking assistance

This referred to asking for help or social support, usually of an instrumental nature.

Examples include statements like:

1. "I allocated the tasks to all family members".
2. "Asked mum to help".
3. "Asked husband to help".
4. "I bought in a baby-sitter".
5. "I got a cleaner in".

4.4.6.5 Reasoning

This refers to cognitive self reassurance in order to calm oneself or help to alleviate a stressful situation. It also refers to an attempt to communicate with another person by calmly talking things through. The following are examples of reasoning:

1. "I compared my situation with a worse one".
2. "I thought I was lucky to have a job".
3. "I just ignored him".
4. "I kept quiet until I got home".
5. "I tried to talk to them both to stop them from arguing".

4.4.6.6 Other Coping Strategies

This category incorporates coping strategies that could not obviously or clearly be classified into any of the other categories. Examples include statements like:

1. "I ate chocolate".
2. "I went shopping".
3. "I had a drink"
4. "I went to bed".
5. "I just watched TV".

These six coping strategies were also identified for 'ideal' coping with the addition of 'no choice' and 'planning'.

4.4.6.7 No choice

No choice indicated that the 'actual' coping strategy used by participants was one that they had to use for whatever reason. Often a reason was not given, although the interviews indicated that other coping strategies were not available. For example, using the 'superwoman' coping strategy was necessary because "no one was available to help and there was no point in crying about it, it just had to be done". The 'no choice' option allowed participants to identify whether or not they could use a different coping strategy to the one they used with the benefit of hindsight. Where they could have used a different coping strategy, one was stated (ideal coping). However, in incidents that allowed the participant no choice but to use the coping strategy reported (actual coping), the 'no choice' option allowed this response to be recorded.

4.4.6.8 Planning

This 'ideal' coping strategy was used to refer to 'being more organised', 'thinking ahead' and 'preparing' for future eventualities. Examples of planning include:

1. "Should have frozen many meals to save time".
2. "Should have planned a better, less busy route to work".
3. "Should have planned the meal earlier, and done the shopping at lunch time".
4. "Should have gone to bed earlier, I wouldn't be so tired with the baby crying all night".
5. "I should have spread the work load out evenly".

Many of the coping strategies reported were easily placed into the above categories. However, because some were reported with limited information it is possible that, had more information been supplied, they could have been placed in a different category or in more than one category. Whilst the 'superwoman' and 'behavioural' categories are both concerned with active responses, a distinction is made whereby the 'behavioural' category refers to the active and practical coping which produces beneficial results (such as effective time management) whereas 'superwoman' coping is concerned with an overload of demands which often have detrimental effects (such as fatigue). This can happen because all demands are being met single handedly often at a cost to the individual, through fewer hours sleep, no breaks during the day, or working on days-off.

4.5 Results

Research question 1: Which type of role strain is reported to occur most frequently?

Each participant provided diary data from which judgement was made about the number of reported incidents of each type of role strain. These were then summed over seven days for all fifteen participants. A total of 75 incidents of role strain were reported. Inter-role conflict occurred 30 times, role overload occurred 25 times, general role strain occurred 15 times and financial stress 5 times. The mean is 18.75 (75/4). These figures converted into percentages suggest that inter-role conflict occurred the most frequently, followed by role overload, general role strain with financial role strain occurring least frequently (figure 4.1).

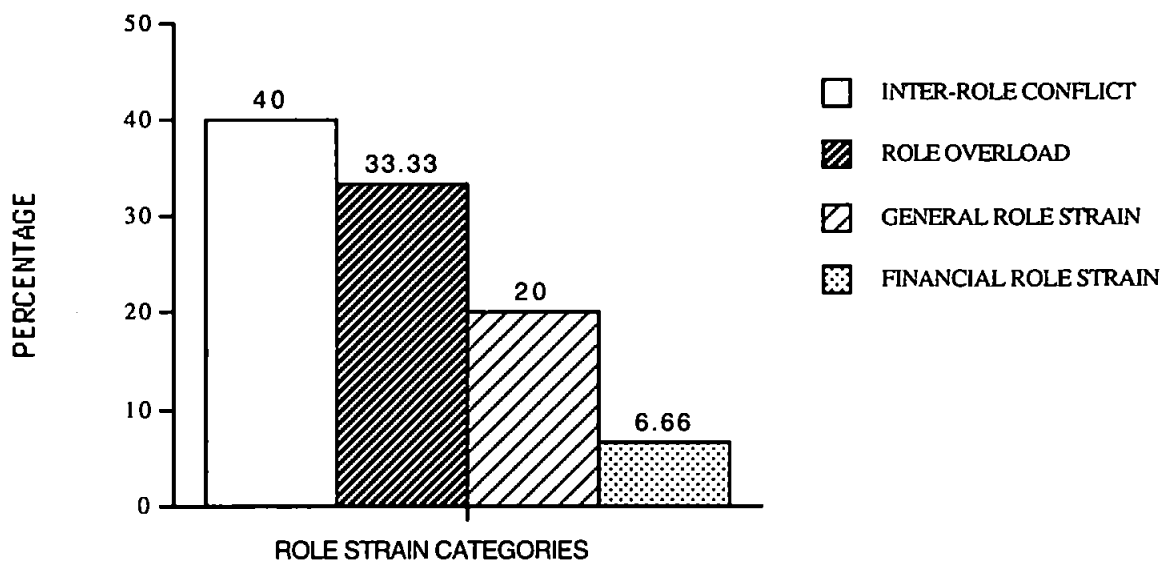


Figure 4.1: Frequency of Role Strain Category Occurrence expressed as a percentage of the total number of reported Role Strain Incidents.

Research question 2: Are some types of role strain perceived to be more stressful than others?

Friedman's test was used to analyse differences in the stress scale for each stressor. These results were not significant suggesting that even though individual role strains are ranked differently in terms of frequency, the degree of perceived stress (on the 1-10 analogue scale) was not significantly different for any of the role strain categories.

Research question 3: Which particular types of coping strategies are associated with particular types of role strain?

Inter-role conflict

Emotional coping was the most commonly used coping strategy for inter-role conflict. This was used 33.3% of the time, for a maximum of 30 incidents ($10/30 \times 100 = 33.3\%$). In other words, the sample reported using emotional coping one third of the time. Figure 4.2 shows all coping strategies used for inter-role conflict.

Role overload

The superwoman coping strategy was the most commonly used for role overload. This was used 48% of the time, for a maximum of 25 incidents ($12/25 \times 100 = 48\%$). Figure 4.3 shows all coping strategies used for role overload.

General role strain

Both emotional and behavioural coping were the most commonly used coping strategies for general role strain. These were used 40% of the time for a maximum of 15 incidents ($6/15 \times 100 = 40\%$). Figure 4.4 shows all coping strategies used for general role strain.

Financial role strain

Emotional coping was the most commonly used coping strategy for financial role strain. This was used 60% of the time, for a maximum of five incidents ($3/5 \times 100 = 60\%$). Figure 4.5 shows all coping strategies for financial role strain.

Inter-role Conflict

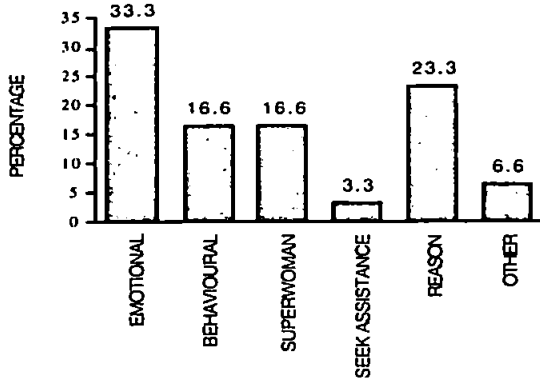


Figure 4.2: Coping Strategies employed for Inter-role conflict expressed as a percentage.

Role Overload

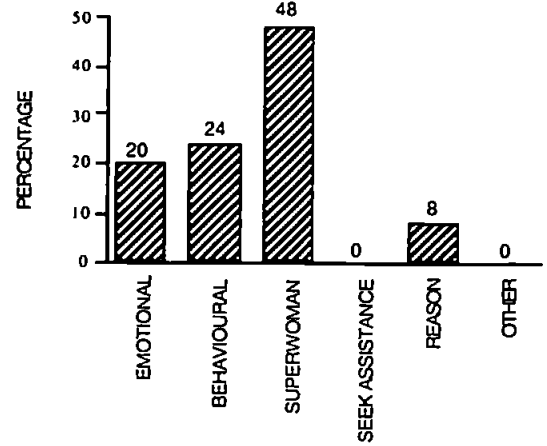


Figure 4.3: Coping Strategies employed for Role Overload expressed as a percentage.

General Role Strain

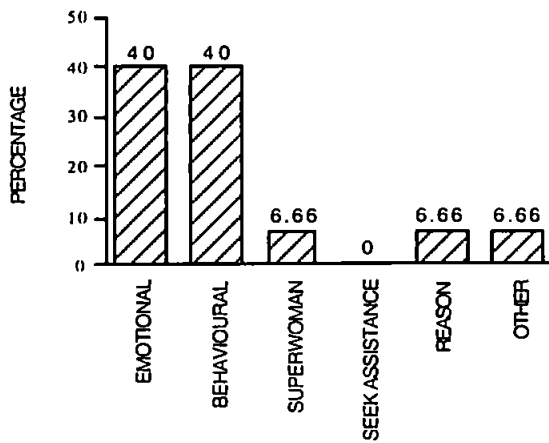


Figure 4.4: Coping Strategies employed for General Role Strain expressed as a percentage.

Financial Role Strain

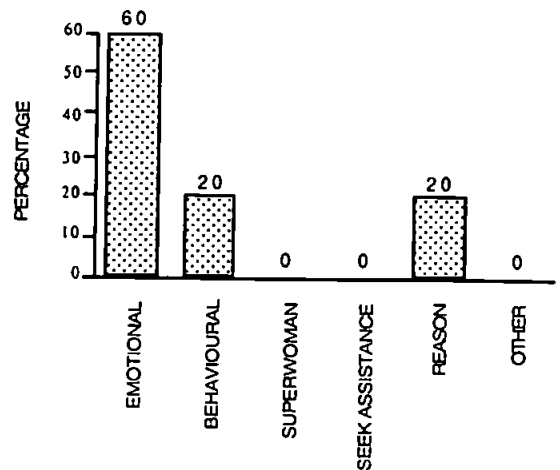


Figure 4.5: Coping Strategies employed for Financial Role Strain expressed as a percentage.

Research question 4: How effective are the coping strategies used for particular types of role strain?

Inter-role conflict

The superwoman coping strategy was rated as the most effective for inter-role conflict. Figure 4.6 shows the means (for the reported effectiveness) of each coping strategy used specifically for inter-role conflict. There were 30 incidents of inter-role conflict and participants rated the effectiveness of each coping strategy specifically used for this type of role strain on a 1-10 analogue scale. The scores were added together and divided by the number of participants who reported using these coping strategies. For example, for seeking assistance, three women reported scores of 7, 8 and 9, the total of which was 24. This was divided by three to produce a score of 8. This suggests that seeking assistance was rated as an effective coping strategy for inter-role conflict.

Role overload

Behavioural coping was rated as the most effective for role overload. Figure 4.7 shows the means (for the reported effectiveness) of each coping strategy used specifically for role overload. For example, emotional coping was used by five participants giving scores of 1, 2, 2, 5 and 8 on the 1-10 analogue scale for coping effectiveness. The total of these scores is 18 which, when divided by the five participants, produced a mean score of 3.6. Therefore, emotional coping was rated as less effective than behavioural coping.

General role strain

The most effective coping strategy for general role strain is reported to be the superwoman coping strategy. Figure 4.8 illustrates the means (for the reported effectiveness) of each coping strategy used specifically for general role strain. For example, behavioural coping was used by six participants who reported coping effectiveness scores on the 1-10 analogue scale of 6, 8, 7, 9, 6 and 6. The total sum of these scores is 42 which, when divided by the six participants, produces a mean of 7 which places behavioural coping second in terms of its effectiveness rating.

Financial role strain

Behavioural coping was ranked as the most effective for financial role strain. Figure 4.9 illustrates the means (for the reported effectiveness) of each coping strategy used specifically for financial role strain. For example, emotional coping was used by three participants who reported scores of 8, 4 and 1, on the 1 - 10 analogue scale for coping effectiveness. The total of these scores is 13 which when divided by the number of participants produces a score of 4.3 ($13/3 = 4.3$). This score suggests that emotional coping for financial role strain is ranked second for effectiveness from the range of coping strategies employed.

Inter-role Conflict

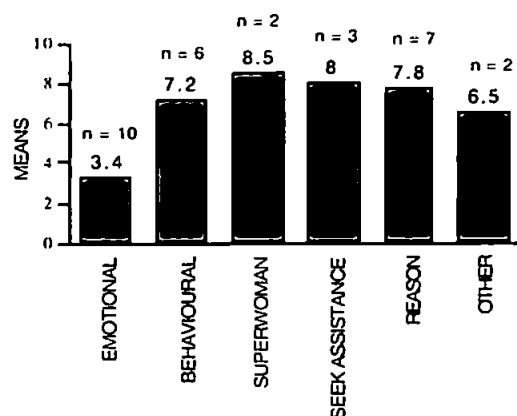


Figure 4.6: Effectiveness of Coping Strategies used for Inter-role conflict.

Role Overload

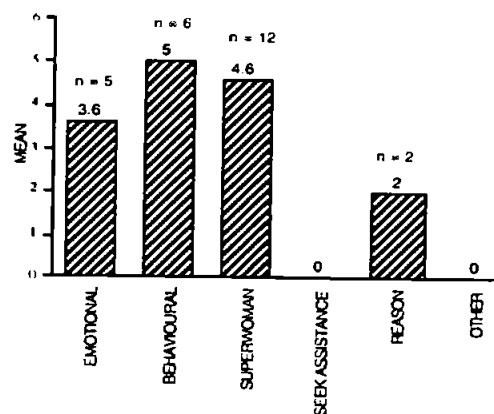


Figure 4.7: Effectiveness of Coping Strategies used for Role-Overload.

General Role Strain

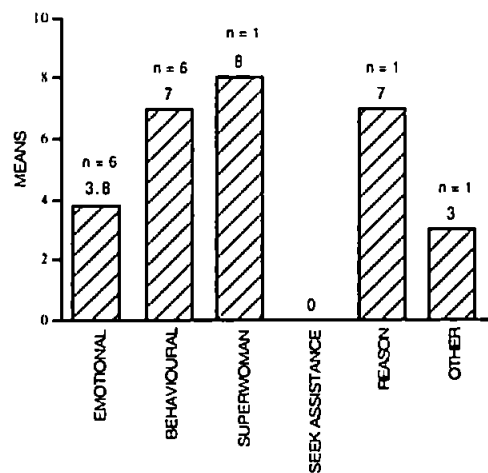


Figure 4.8: Effectiveness of Coping Strategies used for General Role Strain.

Financial Role Strain

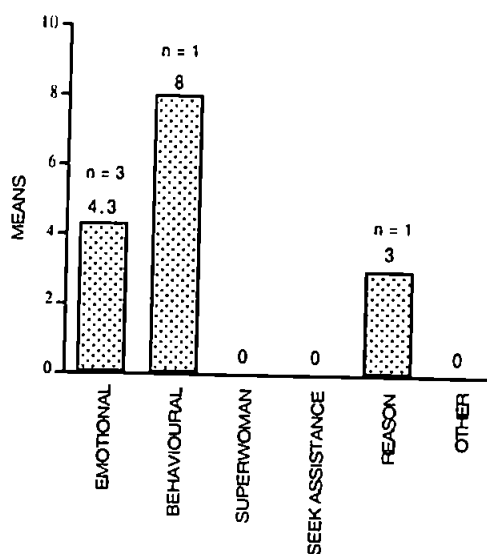


Figure 4.9: Effectiveness of Coping Strategies used for Financial Role Strain.

Research question 5: Which type of coping strategy is preferred with the benefit of hindsight?

Inter-role conflict

Participants reported having 'no choice' but to use the coping strategy they did for inter-role conflict 23.3% of the time. Seven 'no choice' were reported out of a maximum of 30 incidents of coping with inter-role conflict ($7/30 \times 100 = 23.3\%$). Figure 4.10 shows those coping strategies which would have been preferred with hindsight for inter-role conflict.

Role overload

Participants reported that they had no choice but to use the coping strategy they actually used 24% of the time. Figure 4.11 shows ideal coping strategies preferred with the benefit of hindsight for role overload. There were three incidents where participants reported a preference for the superwoman coping strategy, from a total of 25 incidents of role overload ($3/25 \times 100 = 12\%$). In other words, the superwoman coping strategy was preferred in 12% of the reported incidents.

General role strain

'Reasoning' was reported as the ideal coping strategy 33.3% of the time. It was mentioned five times out of the maximum of 15 reported incidents of general role strain and this was converted into a percentage ($5/15 \times 100 = 33.3\%$). Figure 4.12 shows those coping strategies which would have been preferred with hindsight for general role strain.

Financial role strain

Participants reported having no choice but to use emotional coping 80% of the time. Out of five incidents of financial role strain 'no choice' was reported on four occasions ($4/5 \times 100 = 80\%$). Figure 4.13 shows that where they did have a choice, behavioural coping was preferred for the remaining 20% of the time.

Inter-role Conflict

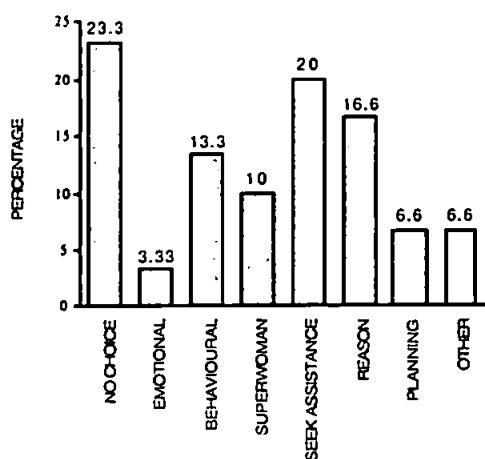


Figure 4.10: Percentage of Coping Strategies preferred in hindsight for Inter-role conflict.

Role Overload

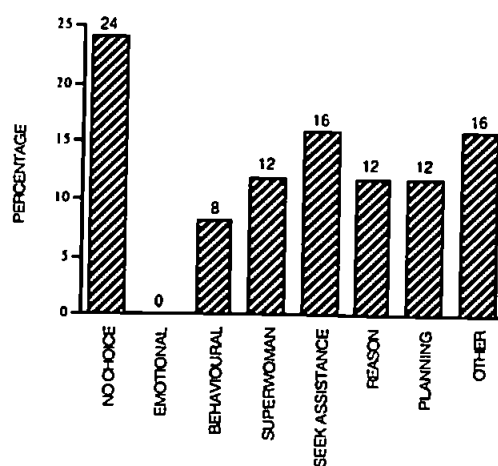


Figure 4.11: Percentage of Coping Strategies preferred in hindsight for Role Overload.

General Role Strain

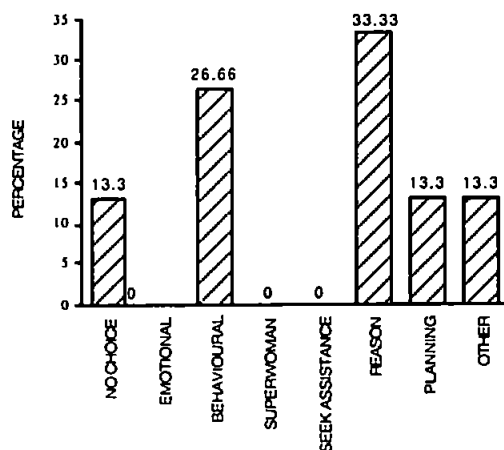


Figure 4.12: Percentage of Coping Strategies preferred in hindsight for General Role Strain.

Financial Role Strain

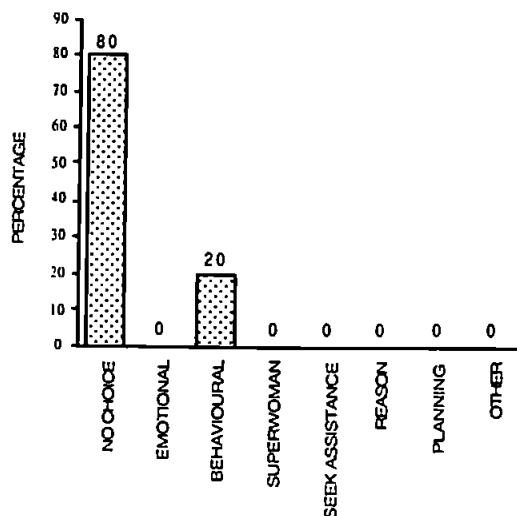


Figure 4.13: Percentage of Coping Strategies preferred in hindsight for Financial Role Strain.

4.6 Discussion

The current study addresses five main research questions and constitutes a preliminary investigation. Each research question will be discussed in turn and, where appropriate, quotations from interview transcripts will be used as illustrations in order to provide a more complete picture of participants' subjective experience of combining multiple roles.

Research question 1: Which type of role strain is reported to occur most frequently?

Figure 4.1 shows that inter-role conflict was reported to occur more frequently than any other role strain. Participants reported role overload as the second most frequently occurring role strain and this was followed by general role strain. Financial role strain was reported to have occurred the least.

To date, research has advocated two main positions in relation to combining multiple roles. One position suggests that results are beneficial (Thoits 1992, 1995; Waldron and Jacobs 1989; and Buller 1994). The other, posits that combining multiple roles can result in the experience of role strain (Walker and Best 1991; Theorell 1991). The findings from this study provide support for the latter of the two positions. Many of the studies on role strain have referred to inter-role conflict or role overload and, in some cases, the two concepts have been interchangeably used and have not been distinguishable (Facione 1994; Pearlin 1989; Barnett, Marshall and Sayer 1991). Where the two have been identified as separate experiences of role strain, there is still little evidence about which type of role strain occurs most frequently. In this regard, the results of this study provide illuminating insights by identifying inter-role conflict as the most frequently occurring role strain when multiple roles are combined. It further illustrates financial role strain as being the least frequently reported, compared with inter-role conflict, role overload and general role strain. Again, to date this category of role strain has not featured prominently in the literature on role strain.

One implication of identifying inter-role conflict as occurring most frequently is that it suggests that participants experience a mismatch of roles or role demands, where

performance in one role may jeopardise performance in another. Furthermore, participants reported experiencing role overload which suggests that they are engaged in too many role demands with too little time to meet these demands. In this situation, according to Rosenfield (1989) the results of role strain are negative because they serve to off-set any benefits gained from combining several different roles. Furthermore, role strain would have the effect of lowering the individual's sense of personal control which can lead to further cumulative negative effects on self worth. Participants who frequently and persistently experience role overload also find that their supply of energy and time is exhausted, so that efforts are stretched to a maximum. In the worst case, individuals are unable to perform satisfactorily in any one role. Although the effects of self worth were not specifically measured in this study, the interview data provides important insights. For example, many of the women experiencing high levels of role strain reported having reduced social contacts due to a reduction in available time and energy. Many reported a feeling of powerlessness, low self esteem, little control over the number of role demands they experienced and very low levels of personal and life satisfaction. One participant reported that her experience of combining multiple roles was like juggling plates on a stick, and that sometimes she was not in control at all. These experiences reflect Rosenfield's (1989) claims that role strain serves to lower perceptions of control.

The results of this study identified general role strain as the third most frequently reported category of role strain. Many of the incidents in this category referred to child care-related stressors. This finding is in agreement with previous studies which have identified role strain as particularly problematic when the parenting role is combined with other roles (Parry 1987; Walker and Best 1991) and especially given that parental responsibility requires long hours for low wages (Downing, Jordan and Stepney 1997). In the current study, interview data suggests that because mothers were engaged in full time employment, they were unavailable to look after their own children and, knowing that parental responsibility requires children to be kept at home and under supervision (Downing et al 1997), this presented the working mother with several concerns. For example, many participants reported feeling guilty for not being with their child throughout the day. Several participants felt concerned and distracted from their

employment role by the thought that their child may not be getting the best type of care. These findings support the notion that specific incidents of child-related stressors can be regarded as role strain and this provides insight into the subjective experience of combining multiple roles.

The current study has identified that worries of a financial nature also constitute role strain, albeit the least frequently reported category when compared with other role strain categories. Nonetheless, this does suggest other underlying worries. For example, the majority of women reported returning to paid work out of financial necessity. This is in accordance with Martin and Roberts (1984) classic large scale study which found that the majority of women resumed employment for economic reasons. One implication of these results is that they contradict the myth that women work for 'pin money' and that they actually have a choice in the matter. The majority of participants in the current study did not have a choice because their husbands wage alone was not sufficient, despite being the primary source of income. In the light of this, it is not difficult to understand why many women reported feelings of frustration at the thought that their work was undervalued by their husbands. Mrs EG illustrates this in her interview:

"Some days I just have to get away from all the housework, children and the job".

Her husbands response was:

"Hundreds of women do it, pack it in then".

The 'fact' that hundreds of women 'do it' means that both husband and wife continue to expect that she will meet all role demands. Further evidence from the diary data in this study shows how the wife's dual role as joint earner is often undervalued. This is consistent with work by Martin and Roberts (1984) who found the same pattern in their study where women considered their husband's job to be more important than their own. Further support for this view is provided by Arber, Gilbert and Dale (1985) who suggest that women's work is indeed seen as trivial when compared to men's. Interview data from the current study lends support and reinforces this view. Indeed, all but one

participant in the present sample expected to have to give up employment for family responsibilities rather than this expectation being placed upon their spouse. For example, if a child fell ill it was usually the mother who took time off work.

Research question 2: Are some types of role strain perceived to be more stressful than others?

Research on role strain has tended to perceive all types of role strain as stressful but no attempt has yet been made to determine participants subjective perception of stress. From the results of this study it is possible to conclude that there is no differentiation in terms of perceived stressfulness between each of the categories of role strain. In other words, participants recognise no difference in the levels of stress they experience irrespective of whether this is from inter-role conflict, role overload, general or financial role strain. Whilst this finding is interesting, it is not considered within the scope of this thesis to pursue this particular avenue of enquiry further.

Research question 3: Which particular type of coping strategies are associated with particular types of role strain?

The results of this study suggest that emotional coping was used most often for inter-role conflict (figure 4.2), general (figure 4.4) and financial role strain (figure 4.5). However, for role overload the superwoman coping strategy was used most frequently (figure 4.3). Behavioural coping was the second most frequently used type of coping for role overload, general and financial role strain, and for inter-role conflict it was reasoning. The coping strategy seeking assistance was not used at all for three types of role strain but was reported for inter-role conflict where it was the least used. These results provide evidence that women are using a variety of coping strategies, in varying degrees, depending upon the type of role strain they experience. This is in line with Beechey (1979) who argued that women are not 'victims of domestic oppression' who respond passively to their ascribed role. On the contrary, they devise strategies for coping with the situations in which they find themselves. This study provides supporting evidence for Beechey's view in that it shows the types of coping strategies which are used

for different types of role strain. Two patterns emerge as salient. Firstly, the coping strategy seeking assistance was conspicuous by its absence. It was not used at all for three role strain categories and was used the least for the fourth. Secondly, emotional coping is used more frequently than any other coping strategy.

For inter-role conflict only one participant reported using seeking assistance, making it the least used type of coping strategy. For role overload, general and financial role strain no participant reported using seeking assistance. This striking finding may provide one explanation for why participants reported using emotional coping more frequently than any other coping strategy, for three out of the four role strains. It also explains why participants reported using the superwoman coping strategy more frequently than any other for role overload. For example, in the majority of cases, participants reported that they had no choice but to cope with work and family demands on their own because help was simply not available. As an example, Mrs ES illustrates how she coped with inter-role conflict when her son became ill and she needed to take time off work:

"I went off sick! It's the attitude...it would be more acceptable to them if I said I'm dying, I've got some awful disease, I'll be off for the next week.."

She reports that some support would have been appreciated and that she should have been able to ask for time off work and come in when she could, but this was not an option open to her.

Similar patterns were evident for general and financial role strain with many participants reporting that there is little assistance to seek, either because no one seems particularly interested or because practical help is perceived as too expensive. Many women reported feelings of guilt and inadequacy if they asked family, friends or neighbours for help with childminding. More importantly, many women were reluctant to ask their own spouse for help. All participants except one, reported that their husbands could have been more helpful. Mrs W' OL reported that her husband offered to do the ironing but this made her feel very guilty because she felt that he was doing her a favour.

Consequently, she felt indebted because she construed ironing as her responsibility. Mrs CR reflects the general feeling of many of the participants when she reports:

"My husband means well, he works full time like me. He starts off well, but over the week he'll have an extra hour in bed, leave his stuff lying around, do less and less and I'm running around like a blue ass-fly, so when I say 'hey' I need some help - he says I'm nagging, then I feel bad."

There were several instances of 'nagging' and similar dialogue which was used to seek assistance. However, these attempts always resulted in feelings of guilt. In many cases participants felt that family related tasks were predominantly part of their traditional roles and where they couldn't meet these demands, they felt particularly inadequate and incompetent. In instances of role overload many participants felt they had no choice but to "get on and do it". The absence of available support meant that many participants reported using the superwoman coping strategy more than any other. Berke and Berke (1979) and Martin and Roberts (1984) provide evidence in support of these findings, suggesting that a wife's employment has little effect on her husband's contribution to the family tasks. Llewelyn and Osbourne (1990) have labelled this the 'superwoman ideal'. Emmons et al (1990) have also recognised this coping strategy as being one of the four most frequently used by women who combine multiple roles. The three other strategies include 'planning and time management', 'cognitive reinterpretation' and 'divesting oneself of unimportant activities and extra responsibilities'. Interview data from the current study provides support for the notion that the superwoman coping strategy is particularly favoured for role overload. This coping strategy is probably an unrealistic one to maintain for any length of time because according to Nash (1990) the so called 'superwoman' actually has a good deal of help from nannies, friends and family. However, many full time working mothers are deprived of these sources of help. Nonetheless, they continue to meet both the traditional female sex roles and the newly acquired role of paid worker without such support. In continuing to cope single handedly, women are engaged in a life style that lacks time for rest, relaxation, and time for themselves. This is certainly the case with Mrs JT who reported starting the ironing at 11.15 in the evening. Here the superwoman coping strategy would leave her feeling tired the next morning when she had to get up early for work and take her son to school. It is to be expected that this coping strategy would lead to

less effective performance in some or all given roles and possibly, to ill health and potential breakdown.

The high frequency of emotional coping for inter-role conflict is in accordance with Beutell and Greenhaus' (1983) study. This study identifies 'reactive' coping strategies as being used most frequently for home and non-home roles. These strategies are characterised by their instant, emotional response and are considered to be less successful than 'active' coping strategies which entail direct and effective action. One explanation for this is provided by Vroom (1966) who suggests that during high levels of stress, an individual's perceptual field is narrowed to the most obvious cues. Given this finding, it would be expected that more individuals would use reactive coping strategies rather than proactive solutions. This was certainly the finding from Shipley and Coats (1992) where women dealt with inter-role conflict using alcohol, irritability with children, and smoking. These particular strategies were not reported in the current study, either because the individuals were unaware of using them, or because the participants were identifiable and did not want to report less desirable methods of coping with role strain. The implications from this current study suggest that emotional coping is not constructive and when coupled with a lack of support, can lead to intense feelings of distress. However, according to Carver and Scheier (1994) emotional coping is most often used where situations must be endured. The diary data in relation to role strain illustrates the prevalence of these types of scenarios.

In instances of inter-role conflict, where participants are required to be in more than one place at the same time, the lack of social support often meant that 'worrying' and reacting emotionally was the normal response. However, 'worrying' has been identified as preparatory communication by Janis (1965). This process allows the individual an opportunity to pre-live an experience or to conduct the work of worrying in order to develop an imagery of being able to cope with the stressful situation before it occurs. Janis points out that the absence of cognitive preparation is responsible for people failing to cope with stress because they don't develop the necessary self-delivered reassurances. By worrying, the individual is preparing for the worst outcome and so is engaging in

useful advance self preparation. Therefore the current study supports the idea that there is important coping value to be gained from worrying and other emotional coping for some cases of role strain.

In conclusion, results from this study suggest that most of the participants are using emotional coping strategies for inter-role conflict, general and financial role strain. There is substantial evidence of a lack of support from work, family and friends and this is reflected in the chosen coping strategy. Women are tending to respond with emotional coping strategies, such as worrying, shouting and panicking. These reactions reflect the sense of powerlessness that many women experience as a result of combining multiple roles within a social and familial context which is bereft of support. However, the findings from this study suggest that these coping strategies are not as 'useless' as may have been previously suggested. Indeed, they could be seen as part of a constructive process which allows women to come to terms with (and in some cases to alter) undesirable personal circumstances (Janis 1965).

Research question 4: How effective are the coping strategies used for particular types of role strain?

Participants ratings of coping effectiveness demonstrates a consistency of preference for behavioural coping (taking direct action) and for the superwoman coping strategy (doing it all single handedly). These were rated most effective, where they were used, for all types of role strain. Interestingly, emotional coping was also rated as effective (between 3.4 - 4.3 out of 10) and it was also the most frequently used coping strategy for three out of the four role strains. More specifically, for inter-role conflict, the superwoman coping strategy was rated as the most effective (figure 4.6) For role overload, general role strain and financial, behavioural coping was rated as the most effective (figures 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9)

Participants used their own criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of a coping strategy. Although a definition of effectiveness was not specifically identified by the researcher, the interview data provided some useful insights into participants' definitions. Several

references from the interview data pointed to factors like, solving problems, reducing anxiety or 'getting the job done', as examples of effective coping strategies. Use of these examples suggest that coping effectiveness is being measured by participants in the short term and higher ratings on the effectiveness scale represent not only immediate outcomes, but also successful outcomes.

In rating both the superwoman and the behavioural coping strategies as the most highly effective, these findings fit into Eckenrode and Gore's (1990) model of work and family stress, where women aim to transfer the same coping strategy from one role to another in order to meet all role demands. This was often accomplished by making full and efficient use of time (behavioural coping) and also by doing everything single handedly (superwoman). However, the latter often resulted in fatigue. An example of the use of these strategies is provided by Mrs K J who reports:

"It meant that the job was done and that's the important thing at the end of the day".

One important implication of rating both the behavioural and the superwoman coping strategies as highly effective is that because these are successful in the short term, their initial positive outcome reinforces their use for future stressful events. The behavioural coping strategy is characteristic of active and practical coping which achieves results without draining the individual of their resources. However, this is in contrast to the superwoman coping strategy which can lead to long term deleterious consequences for the woman's health and well-being. Unfortunately, the behavioural coping strategies on their own are rarely sufficient to allow effective coping in the longer term and so they often lead the individual to use the superwoman strategy as well. By engaging in the superwoman coping strategy for prolonged periods, participants are adopting a pattern of self neglect in terms of their personal health and well-being in order to keep up with unreasonable work and family demands (Facione 1994).

Another finding of interest is that 'reasoning' received a rating of 7.8 out of 10 for effectiveness from seven participants reporting its use for inter-role conflict. Given the

nature of inter-role conflict, reasoning serves to justify prioritising and attending to one role demand over another. For example, several of the participants reported that child care responsibilities had to take priority over all other role demands and they justified this through employing reasoning strategies. However, for role overload, reasoning was only used by two participants and given a mean rating of 2 out of 10. In other words reasoning is not a particularly useful coping strategy for role overload, whereas it is for inter-role conflict.

Only one participant reported using reasoning for general role strain and a total of five participants reported experiencing financial role strain. These small numbers mean that any conclusions which can be drawn from this data are limited.

Research question 5: Which type of coping strategy is preferred with the benefit of hindsight?

Participants reported the type of coping strategies they would have preferred with the benefit of hindsight. They were also given a 'no choice' option. This option helped identify when participants did not have an alternative coping strategy available to them. For example, in role overload, participants reported that they had no choice 24% of the time (figure 4.11). No choice meant that they had no option, even with hindsight, but to use the type of coping strategy they originally reported. This can be seen in figure 4.3 which shows that the superwoman strategy is used more frequently than any other coping strategy.

In three of the four role strain categories, participants reported that most of the time they had no choice. In other words, for inter-role conflict and financial role strain participants had no choice but to use emotional coping strategies (figure 4.10 and 4.13), whereas for role overload they had no choice but to use the superwoman coping strategy most of the time. Potential explanations for these findings have been discussed earlier. It is interesting that for three out of the four role strain categories, participants did not report emotional coping as their preferred choice. However, for inter-role conflict it was preferred by one person as the strategy that would have been used with the benefit of

hindsight (figure 4.10). These results suggest that participants would prefer to deal with their stressors immediately by using active, practical coping strategies and ones that did not involve emotional arousal.

For general role strain, participants would have preferred to use reasoning as their number one choice of coping (figure 4.12). One explanation for this is that many of the incidents in this category referred to child care worries and, with the benefit of hindsight, participants recognised that reassuring themselves that their child was being adequately cared for reduced the level of guilt they experienced, and this enabled them to deal more effectively with these concerns. The superwoman coping strategy was frequently used and reported to be very effective but, with the benefit of hindsight, it would have been preferred much less. Interview data suggests that this coping strategy required tremendous effort, patience and foresight. Consequently, this amount of effort meant that for many of the participants, another coping strategy which involved much less time and effort would have been preferred. Not surprisingly, the preferred alternative coping strategy was seeking assistance which many participants identified as simply not available to them.

4.6.1 Issues of Contention

In considering the results of this pilot study, three salient issues arise. Firstly, the stress category labels; inter-role conflict, role overload, general role strain and financial role strain were determined by the researcher from data provided in the diaries. Although there was very high inter-rater reliability between two independent people and the researcher (Table 4.1), these categories were nevertheless determined according to fairly limited information. Categories of role strain were determined according to incidents that could clearly be placed into them, and any that did not clearly fall into either inter-role conflict, role overload or financial role strain were assigned to the 'general role strain' category. General role strain incorporated a number of different issues which participants reported as being stressful. Consequently, this is the least clearly defined role strain category in the current study. It may be that certain reported incidents of role strain could have been allocated to another category, with the benefit of

more information. For example, "having to attend an official meeting" suggests that stress caused at the prospect of having to attend a meeting was due to not being properly prepared because of too many other demands. If this were the case, then the same incident could be classified under role overload, but because additional information was not available, this incident appeared under 'general stress'. Similarly, "traffic jams", indicates delay, falling behind, and frustration, but could entail being late in collecting children from school in order to take them to the childminder. Given this scenario, a delay in one situation is likely to result in delays in other situations and, sooner or later, the participant may find herself in the situation of needing to be in two places at the same time or having to do two different things at the same time. The same incident would then appear in a very different category, that of inter-role conflict. Although this fictitious example involves a long series of events, it does demonstrate the complicated interactions involved in determining those incidents which should appear in each category. Given the nature of the interactions, it is possible that more categories could usefully be constructed had there been more information in the diaries.

Secondly, the issue of coping effectiveness needs to be treated with some caution. There are potentially several different ways of evaluating the effectiveness of a coping strategy. For example, through one's own health (physical or mental) or through the effect of the chosen strategy upon someone else's health, such as a close member of the family. The definition of coping effectiveness was not imposed upon participants, instead they used their own subjective criteria. Therefore, the meaning of coping effectiveness may not be consistent and may vary depending upon the participant's chosen definition or criteria. Coping effectiveness was also measured in the short term, usually within a few hours and assuming that participants made the diary entries on the same day. If the effectiveness of coping was measured in the long term, the perception of its effectiveness may have been rated differently.

Thirdly, other studies which have produced mixed results have done so partly due to the measuring instruments used, as well as because of differences in definitions of concepts like 'well-being' and 'role strain'. For example, role overload has been measured

subjectively by asking participants to report their experience through questions like 'how often do you just have more to do than you can handle?'. It has also been measured objectively by asking participants to report the specific periods of time spent in paid work, housework, child care, and other areas of importance (Pleck 1985). Likewise, inter-role conflict has been measured subjectively by asking respondents whether they perceive demands from one role as being compatible with the demands from another role (Barnett and Baruch 1985). It has also been measured more objectively, by asking specific questions such as the amount of time missed at work because of a sick child (Kelloway and Barling 1990). To some extent, these issues are applicable to the current study in the sense that the diary method itself may have influenced the results. Although participants were given free choice on what they reported as stressful and were allowed to define their own coping strategies, responses may have been different had they been given more direct questions. For example, whether or not they experienced particular types of role strains and how often. However, it was the intention of the researcher not to impose pre-defined categories upon participants and to gather their subjective experience of combining multiple roles as this occurred.

4.6.2 Conclusion

This preliminary study provides an exploratory analysis of role strain and coping. Diary data suggests that the main sources of role strain for women who combine multiple roles are in the areas of 'inter-role conflict' and 'role overload'. The coping strategies used to deal with these vary according to the type of role strain, the amount of social support available, the coping strategies used in the past and several other factors such as attitudes and support at work, which whilst not directly measured, were evident from the interview transcripts. None of the women said it was easy to manage work and home roles although they all felt that they were managing most of the time. This was usually achieved through coping by doing everything single handedly and this explains the frequent reported use of the superwoman coping strategy. The majority of women (12 out of 15) said that they returned to paid work out of financial necessity and school holidays posed the biggest problems because many of them felt that they were working just to afford a full time childminder. All of the women worked full time with the majority maintaining

prime responsibility for household and family related tasks. Although many of the women reported managing "to juggle" role demands, many did so at a cost, leaving themselves little time for personal pursuits and relaxation. The use of emotional coping was evident for all role strains and in three of the four role strain categories, it was used at the highest frequency and yet it was rated the lowest for effectiveness and not preferred with the benefit of hindsight. Many felt resentful about the lack of social support provided by work and family and, where they did ask for help, they reported feelings of guilt or inadequacy. In conclusion, the results of this study do not support the Role Accumulation Hypothesis which suggests that combining roles provide an individual with additional sources of self esteem, satisfaction and identification. On the contrary, women reported feeling "low and not in control", very "dissatisfied" at their own efforts and their management of role demands, and often felt "torn" between identities. They reported that "wearing many different hats was very difficult" and often costly in terms of causing distress and fatigue. These comments from participants reflect Facione's (1994) findings that women can only successfully combine multiple roles by adopting a pattern of self neglect in terms of their personal health and well-being. In so doing, these results support the Scarcity Hypothesis, which states that combining multiple roles can lead to role strain.

This study achieves a number of aims in that it successfully isolates role strain to specific categories which are of primary concern to women, and also considers the degree to which they are perceived as stressful. It identifies those specific coping strategies which are used by women in response to an identified stressor. In turn, these are rated for their success in controlling or coping with the stressor. As a novel approach, this study also investigated the type of coping strategy which women would have preferred with the benefit of hindsight. This produced interesting results because even where the actual coping strategy used was rated as very successful, women often reported that their ideal coping strategy would have been a preferred other.

These results provide some interesting findings which need to be developed further. For example, as inter-role conflict was the most frequently occurring role strain category, it

would be beneficial to investigate where the mismatch between roles occurred. Similarly, with role overload it would be helpful to know how many roles can successfully be combined, taking into account particular role demands, before their effects begin to show upon individuals. Study two aims to isolate specific roles in order to identify which are compatible and which are mismatched or incompatible. The data on coping strategies has provided a useful insight into the type of coping used specifically for role strain, but it is recognised that these categories were determined by the researcher and what is required is a detailed analysis of standard coping strategies women use typically in their daily lives. Lastly, the interview data strongly suggests that women's quality of life is very much a part of their experience of combining multiple roles. As the majority of women reported dissatisfaction in meeting role demands, the level of social support they received, and the quality of the roles they had, there would be considerable benefit in further investigating the relationship between their life satisfaction, role strain and coping strategies.

CHAPTER FIVE

STUDY TWO

LIFE SATISFACTION IN ROLE STRAIN AND COPING STRATEGIES

5.1 Summary

This study investigated the relationship between life satisfaction, coping strategies and inter-role conflict for the major roles of 'parent', 'spouse', 'work' and 'self'. Comparisons were made between a 'high' and 'low' life satisfaction group for the number of role demands, the degree of inter-role-conflict, and participants' coping strategies. Results from 80 participants suggested that up to three role demands were associated with high life satisfaction whereas four or more role demands showed associations with low life satisfaction. These results help to clarify the use of terms 'too many' and 'too few' roles. Results also show that the highest degree of role conflict occurs between the roles of work and parent, a finding which is in accordance with the literature. The least amount of conflict occurs between the roles of parent and spouse but, whilst these findings concur with the bulk of the literature, the reasons given by participants suggest that the spousal role may not have been regarded as sufficiently important to provide the basis for conflict when combined with other roles. The implications of this finding are discussed. A higher degree of inter-role conflict from all role combinations is found in the low life satisfaction group when compared with the high life satisfaction group. The high life satisfaction group report using more problem-focused, fewer emotion-focused, and fewer 'less effective' coping strategies, than the low life satisfaction group. Interestingly, both groups make little use of emotion-focused coping and the low life satisfaction group report using as many 'less effective' coping strategies as problem-focused ones. The study concludes by considering the extent to which an individual's underlying personality may influence responses to coping, inter-role conflict, and perceptions of life satisfaction.

5.2 Introduction

The preliminary investigation into coping with role strain identified some important findings which are followed through in this study. Participants who combine work and family roles report experiencing inter-role conflict most followed by role overload. The interview analyses from this study identified some of the more salient qualitative issues arising from the experience of combining multiple roles. Women emphasised both affective and cognitive factors in identifying how they felt and what they thought about their situation, their roles, and their overall life styles. The interview data suggests that levels of satisfaction, contentment, and happiness depended on how well participants perceived themselves as fulfilling their work and family role demands, their perception of success in coping with role strain, and their overall quality of life and future expectations. The cognitive and affective evaluation made by participants in the interview data in study one, suggests that individuals are in essence referring to life satisfaction (Pavot, Diener, Colvin and Sandvik 1991). Life satisfaction is the cognitive evaluation an individual makes of his or her life (Ryff and Keyes 1995).

Studies in the area of life satisfaction suggest that women who work and have family responsibilities report greater life satisfaction than those who do not work and that this is also related to personal and marital satisfaction (Kandal, Davies and Ravies 1985). There is evidence to suggest that employed women with young children report a decrease in life satisfaction and an increase in psychological distress (Hochschild 1989; Quinn and Allen 1989; Rachlin 1987). Reasons given for these findings include the notion that women who try to fulfil the obligations of both home and paid work, experience greater role strain which may translate into lower levels of overall life satisfaction. Some of the literature suggests that those women who combine the roles of mother, wife and employee report much higher levels of life satisfaction than those who do not (Alderman 1994). It is possible that increases in income from being employed may result in access to resources for the household which save time and energy. Also a higher income may mean that these individuals can afford more leisure time and breaks for relaxation and this would be expected to contribute towards making the individual feel better about their lives. One consequence of these changes would be reports of increased life satisfaction.

Research has found that life circumstances and life satisfaction covary contemporaneously (Lehman, Slaughter and Myers 1991; Oliver and Mohamad 1992), but it has not yet been established that life satisfaction varies as a result of changes in life circumstances (e.g. an increase in income). On the other hand, Rosenfield (1992) argues that improved life circumstances can promote life satisfaction, albeit indirectly, by increasing perceptions of control.

Perceptions of control are also influenced by an individual's choice of coping strategies. The use of effective coping strategies has been widely researched and identified as functional in terms of increasing perceptions of control. On the other hand, ineffective coping strategies are associated with increased uncontrollability and unhappiness (Aldwin and Revenson 1987). Coping strategies can be defined here as those cognitive and behavioural efforts used by an individual to reduce the effects of stress which in turn should have an effect on perceptions of life satisfaction (Fleming, Baum and Singer 1984). Although coping strategies have captured the interest of many researchers for over four decades (Folkman and Lazarus 1986; Mitchell, Cronkite and Moos 1983; Forsythe and Compas 1987), the picture is still incomplete because several studies have presented mixed results. There is, according to Folkman and Lazarus (1985), some consensus that coping can be conceptualised in terms of emotion-focused coping (which deals with the level of distress), and problem-focused coping (which is directed towards the management of a problem). However, even this notion is not entirely problem-free because some strategies serve both emotion and problem-focused coping functions (Terry 1991a). For example, seeking of social support incorporates both emotion and problem-focused elements because it is possible to seek social support for instrumental reasons (to get something done), or emotional reasons (to feel better about something). This example illustrates the potential overlap involved in some apparently straightforward coping strategies.

The two concepts are also assigned different values. Problem-focused coping is often associated with measures of psychological well-being (Folkman and Lazarus 1986), whereas emotion-focused coping is often associated with poorer mental health (Aldwin

and Revenson 1987; Terry 1991b). Problem-focused coping is reported to be more effective, particularly if the event has some potential for control, whereas emotion-focused coping tends to be seen as adaptive only in low control events because it does not tackle the source of the problem (Vitaliano, DeWolfe, Maiuro, Russo and Katon 1990). A low control event is where an individual does not have the power to take effective action to eliminate the source of the problem. Despite these differences Folkman (1984) argues that the optimal coping style actually consists of the largest possible repertoire of coping responses and these include both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. He argues that because men and women are exposed to different stressors, they use different types of coping strategies. There is further support for this notion from Folkman and Lazarus (1980); Billings and Moos (1981) and Pearlin and Schooler (1978). However, a critique by Banyard and Graham-Bermann (1993) suggests that these apparent differences in coping between men and women are not actually validated. Nonetheless, many authors continue to emphasise these perceived differences, in the literature, despite the fact that this point has yet to be fully substantiated.

The current study does not compare gender differences in either role strain or coping strategies. However explanations for the occurrence of role strain are considered within a framework of individual differences which are primarily based on gender differences. Although men and women may be exposed to different stressors, both can experience role overload whereas inter-role conflict is frequently only equated with women's experiences of role involvement (Woods 1985; Barnett and Baruch 1985; Pleck 1985; Kelloway and Barling 1990; Illgen and Hollenbeck 1991). Both types of role strain occur under specific conditions and several explanations have been put forward in an attempt to explain this. One of the oldest and most relevant explanations is put forward by Hall and Hall (1980) who suggest that women experience role overload because they are expected to fulfil the roles of mother, homemaker, and career person without support from their husbands and families. Husbands might 'intellectually' accept and encourage their wives in their careers but few provide practical assistance by actually sharing role demands. This view was supported by the preliminary study, with participants reporting that they did not receive the assistance they needed. Rudd and McKenry (1986) suggest

that women can experience role overload and still continue to perceive their husbands and children as supportive. This is particularly the case where emotional support is available, because this is often perceived to be more important than physical assistance with household tasks. It would seem that the perceived availability of emotional support would determine the experience of role overload and, in some instances, the experience of other types of role strain such as inter-role conflict.

Hall and Hall (1980) provide an account for why women experience more inter-role conflict than their male counterparts. They state that men have roles which are salient at different times, termed 'salient sequentially', whereas women have roles that are often salient at the same time, termed 'salient simultaneously'. As a consequence this latter combination increases the possibility of inter-role conflict. Indeed, Pleck's (1985) Sensitisation Theory argues that the 'self' role for women is often associated with both spousal and parental responsibilities and that society places great emphasis on women to succeed in both of these roles. In acquiring an additional role, women form another dimension to their role identity and this increases the likelihood of inter-role conflict. Karasek's (1979) two dimensional model suggests that the traditional roles of spouse and mother are laden with obligations and that this is in contrast to the role of paid worker. For men, the traditional role of breadwinner satisfies both the work and family role obligations, but for women the amount of time spent in one domain limits the amount of time available to spend in another. For many women, combining multiple roles leads to greater work-family conflict from role demands and expectations. Simons (1995) proposes one way in which women can reduce this work-family conflict. He suggests that keeping role identities, such as mother, wife and worker independent from each other, would serve to protect the individual from the experience of negative events spilling over from one role into another. Simons acknowledges that this is easier for men than it is for women because men naturally have greater independence between work and family roles, so there is little chance of experiencing inter-role conflict in these areas.

The role of wife has itself not been reported to cause much overload and certainly no inter-role conflict, except when it is combined with the role of paid worker. Where a

role combination results in conflict with the spousal role, Person (1989) argues that there are important consequences for women. He argues that women are 'keepers of marriage' and therefore face tremendous pressure to meet both spousal role requirements and traditional definitions of feminine behaviour. If they do not meet these expectations, women run the risk of jeopardising marital relations. Studies on role strain which examine the combination of specific roles such as the role of spouse, parent and employee, often assume that the spousal and parental roles are not difficult to combine, but recognise that demands from husbands and children can create some conflict (Pleck 1985). The spousal and parental roles can be contrasted with the paid worker role because, whilst the former are both laden with obligations, the paid worker role is usually associated with privileges for the individual. Kelly and Voydanoff (1985) provide evidence to suggest that conflict between work and family roles can result in poor performance of the parental role. These conflicts are often resolved by individuals prioritising roles and investing resources into meeting those which are the most salient. For example, men who experience inter-role conflict between the demands of their spousal and parental role, often resolve this by leaving the spousal role unfilled. This is because the worker and parental roles are perceived as presenting more immediate demands whereas the spousal role is taken as one that can be delayed (Chassin, Zeiss, Cooper and Reaven 1985). Simon (1995) provides evidence of greater inter-role conflict occurring between the roles of paid worker and parent with only moderate conflict occurring between the spousal and work role. Frone and Rice (1987) and Thompson and Blau (1993) also found evidence for an incompatibility between the roles of paid worker and parent. Women who experienced conflict between their work and spousal roles, reported putting their marriages on the "back burner" because the work role presented more immediate demands. There is some evidence that work-family conflicts are associated with increased health risks (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985), decreased productivity, high absenteeism (Pleck 1985), and reduced life satisfaction (Facione 1994). It is useful to know the extent of the association between inter-role conflict and life satisfaction but this finding is somewhat limited because, whilst it identifies the work role as being incompatible with the family role, it does not specify which family roles are incompatible. What is required is further insight into those

specific role combinations which produce inter-role conflict and the extent to which these interact with perceptions of life satisfaction.

The Role Accumulation Hypothesis states that well-being is increased as the number of social roles occupied increases (Hong and Seltzer 1995). However, Kandal, Davies and Ravies (1985) suggest that the lowest levels of stress are found amongst women who have the least complex roles. On the other hand the Scarcity Hypothesis states that the more roles an individual accumulates, the greater the probability of exhausting that person's supply of time and energy. This then leads to a greater risk of experiencing role overload and psychological distress (Rosenfield 1989, 1992). Role overload can also result from combining just one or two roles, if the individual has too many role demands and too little time to meet the requirements of each role, and this can affect well-being by lowering levels of satisfaction. The literature on inter-role conflict is clear in stating that the incompatibility of a specific number of roles, (i.e. two or more) can result in inter-role conflict. However the experience of role overload is dependent on a variety of other factors such as available social support, flexibility at work, and availability of time and energy. Therefore, role involvement and its association with increased or decreased life satisfaction and well-being, is very much a subjective experience. Although much of the research points to the notion of 'too many' or 'too few' roles, it does not specify what is meant by 'too many' or 'too few', or how this relates to life satisfaction. Therefore, the current study will investigate the relationship between the number of role demands, experienced by women with different reported levels of subjective life satisfaction.

The aim of this study is to further investigate the interaction between role strain, coping strategies, and life satisfaction. Interview data from the preliminary study identified some specific areas of women's lives with which they were dissatisfied. These areas included not having sufficient leisure time or time to pursue interests and hobbies. They also experienced a lack of time to develop their sense of individuality separately from their prescribed roles of parent, employee and wife. Participants reported levels of satisfaction with their family lives in terms of what they could or could not afford, their health, their social life, and the area in which they lived. Given that participants

emphasised wanting more time for personal development, the current study will examine the compatibility of combining the self as a separate role with that of parent, worker and spouse. The latter three roles have previously received much attention, but the self role in conjunction with other roles has received little attention. This is because the self role is assumed to comprise primarily of the spousal and parental identities. However, Rothman (1978) pointed out the potential conflict between the self and parental role and the self and spousal roles showing that, what benefits the husband and child, cannot be assumed to automatically benefit the woman. Indeed, in some circumstances, what benefits the husband and child may deplete the woman. Therefore, given that an individual's total identity can be considered as being comprised of these particular sub-identities, the self is recognised as a role in this study.

5.3 Hypotheses

Role overload has been identified as resulting from a combination of different roles such as the roles of parent, spouse, worker and self. For much of the time, an individual can satisfactorily manage the demands of these three roles. However, when demands exceed the reserves of time and energy, the result is role overload. As previously stated, role overload has been associated with poor life satisfaction (Pleck 1985). There is currently no research into the relationship between a specific number of role demands and reported levels of life satisfaction. Generally, individuals are seen as occupying three main roles. It is expected that the role demands associated with combining the roles of parent, spouse, worker and self will be related to high life satisfaction. In contrast, experience of less than three role demands and more than three role demands will be expected to be related to low life satisfaction. Therefore the following hypothesis is proposed:

1) Those with low life satisfaction will show a bimodal distribution with peaks at less than three role demands and more than three role demands (role demands as derived from the demographic data and not main roles). Those with high life satisfaction will show a unimodal distribution with peaks falling at three role demands.

The research literature suggests that individuals experience the greatest incompatibility between the paid worker and parental roles (Frone and Rice 1987;

Thompson and Blau 1993). Research of this nature also contends that individuals resolve incompatibilities between their major roles by giving one role priority over another and neglecting or postponing the least demanding role. The interview data from the preliminary study suggested that many participants had concerns about their parental and employment roles and felt that their spouse was emotionally supportive most of the time but could have been more helpful with domestic chores. Despite this, none of the women expressed any concerns about meeting their spousal role demands and there was no indication of conflict between the spousal and parental roles. Perhaps, this is because both roles are seen as having compatible obligations (Barnett, Marshall and Singer 1992). Consequently, the greatest conflict is to be expected between the paid worker and parental role and the least conflict is expected between the spousal and parental role combination. Therefore the following hypothesis is proposed:

2) Combining the work and parent roles will lead to the highest levels of reported inter-role conflict, whereas combining the spousal and parental roles will lead to the lowest levels of reported inter-role conflict, when compared with all other role combinations.

Interview data from the preliminary study and other supporting evidence (Thompson and Blau 1993) suggests that those individuals who report higher levels of role strain (e.g. inter-role conflict) will also report greater dissatisfaction with themselves, their ability to cope and with their lives. In this regard it is expected that:

3) Those with low life satisfaction will show greater inter-role conflict over the six role combinations compared with those with high life satisfaction.

Several studies have shown an association between effective coping and greater levels of life satisfaction (Bolger 1990). It would follow that coping which is not considered to be as effective would be associated with lower levels of satisfaction. Certainly the results of the preliminary study suggest that participants' levels of satisfaction depend upon how well they perceive themselves as coping with role strain. Those using emotional coping strategies often did so because they had poor social support which meant that they had little choice but to use coping strategies which were exhaustive and time consuming in the long term. Therefore, it is expected that the reported use of particular coping strategies

will be associated with reported levels of life satisfaction. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

4) Those with high life satisfaction will report using more problem-focused, fewer emotion-focused, and fewer 'less effective' coping strategies compared with those with low life satisfaction.

5.4 Method

5.4.1 Participants

Participants were contacted via work organisations and through the university. One hundred and twenty three women, returning to work and education after having children, completed a set of questionnaires. Fifty seven of these women had returned to work and sixty six were enrolled in education. All questionnaires that were incomplete or from participants who reported that they were single, widowed or divorced were not used. From the remaining 80 participants, 'high' and 'low' satisfaction groups were formed using the questionnaire on life satisfaction. Participants were allocated into the high life satisfaction group if their scores on the life satisfaction questionnaire were in excess of the median score (median = 54) 41 participants were in this category. Participants were allocated to the low life satisfaction group if their scores were 54 or under, 39 participants were in this category. The means and standard deviations are presented for paid worker and students according to 'high' and 'low' satisfaction groups.

GROUPS	HIGH LIFE SATISFACTION		LOW LIFE SATISFACTION	
	MEANS	S.D.	MEANS	S.D.
PAID WORK n = 38	62.6 n = 17	5.84	47.0 n = 21	8.65
STUDENT n = 42	64.0 n = 24	6.32	40.0 n = 18	11.44

Table 5.1: Mean number of participants in high and low life satisfaction groups returning to paid work or to education.

The final group of participants were aged between 23-54, mean age 30.3 years (S.D.3.3). Sixty two percent of the students also worked part time but in the 'paid work' group all of the participants were engaged in full time employment. In both groups, participants combined the roles of parent, spouse and self with that of worker/student. For reasons of simplicity this latter category will be referred to as the 'work' role. All participants were married and had one or more children and some of the participants cared for a dependent family relative, that lived in the household.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS:

<u>AGE</u>	<u>LOW SATISFACTION</u>	<u>HIGH SATISFACTION</u>
UNDER 25	4	0
25 - 34	22	15
35 - 44	12	23
45 - 54	1	3
55 +	0	0
 <u>AGE OF CHILDREN</u>		
UNDER ONE	9	17
1 - 4	15	15
5 - 10	11	5
11 - 15	3	3
16 - 18	1	1
 <u>DEPENDENT RELATIVES</u>		
	6	2
 <u>REASON FOR RETURNING TO WORK</u>		
FINANCIAL REASONS	26	21
PURSUE CAREER	7	13
INTEREST	5	6
OTHER	1	1
 <u>PERSONAL INCOME</u>		
£5000 OR LESS	4	9
£5000 - £9999	6	3
£10, 000 - £14, 999	9	9
£15,000 - £19,999	11	7
£20,000+	9	13
 <u>EDUCATION</u>		
CSE/O - LEVELS	3	0
A-LEVELS	15	5
DEGREE - LEVEL	8	12
PROFESSIONAL	10	19
OTHER	3	5

5.4.2 Procedure

Initial contact with students was made via various course co-ordinators at the university where the data was collected. Permission was sought to outline the research and to gather names and contact numbers of those students who combined the multiple roles of mother and wife and who were willing to take part in the research. Generally, students were keen to participate, either out of interest, or because they required a participation point for their own course of study. They were contacted and questionnaires were administered. Some students returned the questionnaires by post, others by hand but, in some cases, several reminders had to be sent. Despite this a return rate of approximately 95% was achieved. Students were later contacted for an interview, but not all of them were available for this. In total 16 interviews were conducted in this group.

In the 'paid worker' group, contact was often made through word of mouth, advertising, by writing to employers, or via child care nurseries. Many of the paid workers agreed to participate, either because they felt that such research was important, or because they saw an opportunity to express their opinions. Questionnaires were distributed to interested participants and were returned by post or collected in person. A return rate of approximately 80% was achieved. Further contact was made in order to arrange an interview and, whilst this was not always possible, a total of 27 interviews were completed for this group.

5.4.3 Measures

A series of questionnaires and a tape recorder for the purpose of interviewing was used in this study. The details regarding these measures are provided in chapter three.

5.4.3.1 Demographic Information

Demographic data was collected and included details of age, income, work history, education, number and age of children, spouse's employment status, dependent relatives, and the type of social support available (appendix 3).

5.4.3.2 Satisfaction with Life

Life Satisfaction scores were measured using a 1-6 point scale, in the areas of 'life-style', 'personal life' and 'standard and achievements'. These were combined to produce a total score. There were four items measuring satisfaction with an individual's life style e.g. 'the way you spend your leisure time'. Five items measured personal life satisfaction, e.g. 'your family life', and five items measured satisfaction with standards and achievements. For example, 'moral standards and values in Britain today'. The questionnaire was produced by Lindley in 1987 (appendix 4).

5.4.3.3 Role Demands

The number of role demands for each participant was recorded from the demographic data they provided. Role demands consisted of the following criteria: caring for dependants other than children, students working part time for financial reasons, returning to paid work for financial reasons, and one role demand for each child below the age of 12 years. The maximum number of role demands which was allocated to any one participant was seven, and the minimum number of role demands allocated was one. It is important to point out that the role of self is not included as a role demand for the purpose of this part of study two or in the case studies which follow in chapter seven. Indeed, it is important to note that the 'roles' of parent, spouse, worker and self were not included in counting role demands, since they are constant for all participants.

5.4.3.4 Inter-Role Conflict

A questionnaire developed by Holahan and Gilbert (1979) was used to identify inter-role conflict for the major roles of 'parent', 'worker', 'spouse' and 'self' (as self actualising person). Subjects were asked to respond to the items using a 5-point Likert scale which ranged from 'causes no internal conflict' (1) to 'causes high internal conflict' (5) (appendix 6). Each scale measures conflict between a pair of the four roles (e.g., spouse vs. self):

Parent vs. self - "Wanting to be alone versus your child wanting to be with you".

Spouse vs. parent - "Spending prime time developing and maintaining the relationship with your spouse versus spending prime time developing and maintaining the relationship with your child".

Work vs. parent - "Devoting a large percentage of your time to the raising of your family versus devoting a large percentage of your time to your work".

Spouse vs. self - "Wanting your spouse to participate in household management versus your spouse wanting to devote his time to his own career development".

Work vs spouse - "Wanting to be a 'good' spouse versus being unwilling to risk taking the time from your work".

Work vs self - "Letting your work consume nearly all your time and energy versus devoting time to the development of outside interests".

5.4.3.5 Coping - Cope Questionnaire

The Cope questionnaire (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989) (appendix 6), is a multidimensional coping inventory which is based on the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1985). It classifies coping in terms of problem-focused, emotion-focused and 'less effective' coping strategies. In total there are 15 distinct scales and subjects are required to respond to each item by scoring 1-4, where;

1 = "I usually don't do this at all".

2 = "I usually do this a bit".

3 = "I usually do this a medium amount".

4 = "I usually do this a lot".

Problem-focused:

Active coping - direct action, tackling the source of the problem.

Planning - thinking about action strategies, best ways of handling the problem.

Suppression of competing activities - putting other projects aside, trying to avoid becoming distracted by other events.

Restraint coping - waiting until the right opportunity presents itself.

Seeking social support for instrumental reasons - advice or information.

Emotion-focused coping:

Seeking social support for emotional reasons - getting moral support, sympathy or understanding.

Positive reinterpretation and growth - seeing the problem in a positive light.

Denial - refusing to believe that the stressor is real.

Acceptance - an acceptance that the stressor is real.

Religion - fate, external forces, engaging in religious activities.

Less Effective Coping:

Focusing on venting of emotions - focus on and ventilate the distress felt.

Behavioural disengagement - reducing or giving up attempts to deal with the stressor.

Mental disengagement - distraction from thinking about the problem.

Humour - making jokes about the stressor.

Alcohol and drugs - disengaging from the stressor through drugs and/or alcohol.

5.5 Results

Hypothesis 1: Those with low life satisfaction will show a bimodal distribution with peaks at less than three role demands and more than three role demands (role demands as derived from the demographic data and not main roles). Those with high life satisfaction will show a unimodal distribution with peaks falling at three role demands (see figure 5.1).

These distributions were compared using a Kolmogorov-Smirnov nonparametric two-tailed statistical test. No significant difference between the two samples was found $D_{mn}=0.2$ $p > 0.05$ (figure 5.2). Figure 5.1 shows predicted distributions of role demand for low and high life satisfaction groups. Figure 5.1 shows the actual distribution between high and low life satisfaction and role demands.



Figure 5.1: The predicted relationship between life satisfaction and role demands.

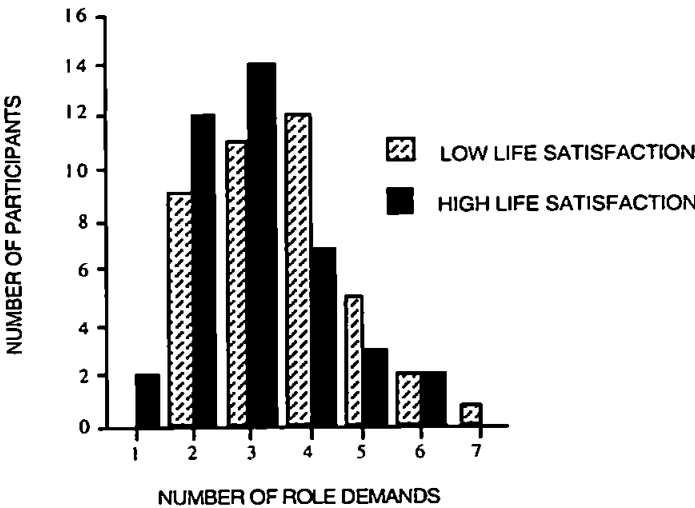


Figure 5.2: The actual relationship between life satisfaction and role demands.

Despite the absence of the predicted difference in the distributions, there did appear to be a relationship between life satisfaction and the number of role demands. Therefore, the effect of role demands on life satisfaction was further analysed by creating three separate groups from the distribution; 'high', consisting of 4-7 role demands, 'medium', consisting of 3 role demands and 'low', consisting of 1-2 role demands. It was expected that the 'medium' role demand group would report a higher life satisfaction and the 'low' and 'high' role demand groups would have a lower life satisfaction. Table 5.2 provides information on mean ratings, Standard Deviations and the number of participants in each role demand group.

	HIGH ROLE DEMANDS	MEDIUM ROLE DEMANDS	LOW ROLE DEMANDS
MEAN RATINGS	32.59	39.64	39.56
STANDARD DEVIATIONS	11.25	7.26	5.60
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	32	25	23

Table 5.2: The mean ratings, standard deviations and number of participants in 'high', 'medium' and 'low' role demand groups on life satisfaction scores.

A one-way between subjects Analysis of Variance was chosen because there were three independent groups (high, medium and low role demands) ($F(2,77) = 6.17$; $p=0.03$). The independent variable was level of role demand and the dependent variable was reported life satisfaction. Table 5.3 shows a significant effect at the $p<0.05$ level in terms of the influence of role demand on reported life satisfaction scores.

SOURCE	SUM OF SQUARE	DF	MEANS SQUARE	F-VALUE	P-VALUE
GROUPS	943.7	2	471.8	6.17	0.03
ERROR	5889.1	77	76.5		
TOTAL	6832.8	79			

Table 5.3: Analysis of Variance showing effect of role demand on life satisfaction.

Post-hoc follow up analysis (Fishers Least Significant Difference) was used because differences in life satisfaction depending on the role demand group were not predicted. This test shows that there was a significant difference in life satisfaction scores between the 'high' and 'medium' role demand groups (LSD = 4.669, $p < 0.05$), and the 'high' and 'low' role demand groups (LSD = 4.781, $p < 0.05$), but not between the 'medium' and 'low' role demand groups (LSD = 5.044, $p > 0.05$ (Table 5.4).

ROLE DEMAND GROUPS	LSD	P-VALUE	SIGNIFICANT
HIGH VS MEDIUM	4.669	$p < 0.05$	YES
HIGH VS LOW	4.781	$p < 0.05$	YES
MEDIUM VS LOW	5.044	$p > 0.05$	NO

Table 5.4: Fishers Least Significant Difference test for life satisfaction between role demand groups.

In terms of the hypothesis, this meant that the high role demand group report low life satisfaction and the low and medium role demand groups report high life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Combining the work and parent roles will lead to the highest levels of reported inter-role conflict, whereas combining the spousal and parental roles will lead to the lowest levels of reported inter-role conflict, when compared with all other role combinations.

The independent variable is the six types of role combinations and the dependent variable is the amount of inter-role conflict as measured by the questionnaire. A one way repeated within subjects Analysis of Variance was used to test this hypothesis. Table 5.5 presents the means, standard deviations and the potential range of scores for all role combinations.

ROLE COMBINATIONS	MEAN RATINGS	STANDARD DEVIATION	POTENTIAL RANGE OF SCORES
WORK vs SELF	8.88	4.13	4 - 20
WORK vs PARENT	10.16	4.53	4 - 20
SPOUSE vs PARENT	4.35	2.06	3 - 15
SPOUSE vs SELF	7.47	3.63	4 - 20
PARENT vs SELF	8.75	3.27	3 - 15
WORK vs SPOUSE	6.22	2.58	4 - 20

Table 5.5: The mean ratings, standard deviation and range of scores for inter-role conflict between pairs of roles.

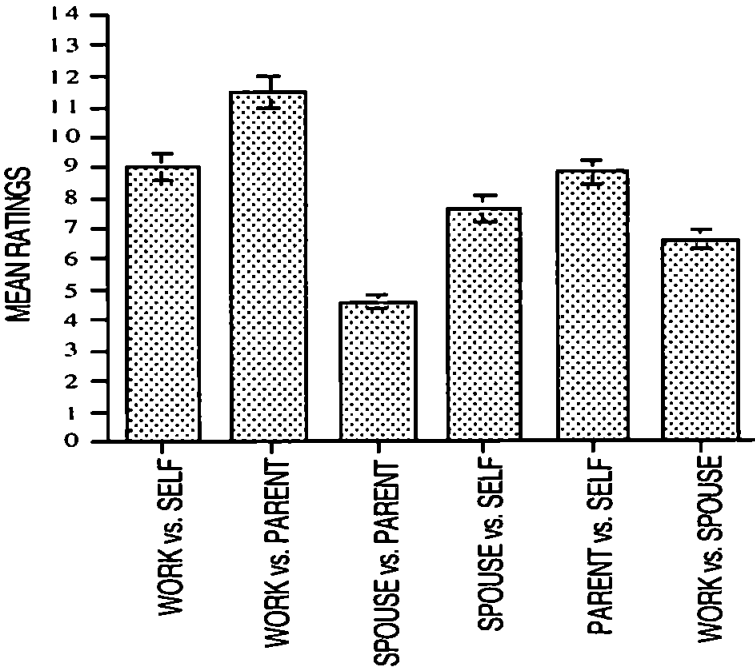


Figure 5.3: Mean ratings of inter-role conflict for each role combination.

Table 5.6 shows a one way repeated measures ANOVA comparing inter-role conflict between the six pairs of role combinations.

SOURCE	D F	M S	D F ERROR	M S ERROR	F	P
ROLE COMBINATION	5	435.79	395	9.145	47.65	.0000000*

* significant at $p < 0.0000001$

Table 5.6: Analysis of Variance showing effect of six role combinations.

As predicted this analysis shows a highly significant difference in inter-role conflict amongst the six pairs of role combinations. Inspection of the mean ratings in table 5.5 shows that, as predicted, the highest level of inter-role conflict was for worker vs parent and the lowest was for spouse vs parent.

Given that the scales were different for combining the roles of work and parent with that of spouse and parent, this point was given further consideration. In measuring the inter-role conflict between the roles of work and parent, the possible range of scores are variable from 4-20 because there are 4 items each with a 1-5 range of scores. However, in measuring the inter-role conflict between the roles of spouse and parent, the possible range of scores from only 3 items is 3-15 because there are three items each with a range of 1-5. This would mean that the highest scores and therefore the greater inter-role conflict is likely to be evident in the work vs parent roles. In order to determine whether differences between the two scales were significant or just the outcome of this scaling difference, the median of each scale item, for all participants was calculated. This allowed a direct comparison of the scales since all items were scored along the same five point scale. For the work vs parent scale, the median item scale was 3. This means that on average, participants were scoring in the middle of the inter-role conflict scale; 'some internal conflict'. For the spouse vs parent scale the median was 1. Therefore, on average, participants were identifying the scale; 'no internal conflict'. The difference in the median on items in the two scales suggest that the highest amount of conflict between the roles of work and parent, and the lowest amount of conflict between the roles of spouse and parent,

were not due to scaling differences. These differences were due to participants actual experience of inter-role conflict when combining these roles.

Hypothesis 3: Those with low life satisfaction will show greater inter-role conflict over the six role combinations compared with those with high life satisfaction.

A mixed design ANOVA, with life satisfaction as a between subjects factor, type of role combination as a within subjects factor and inter-role conflict as the dependent variable, was used to test this hypothesis. Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) points out that profile analysis using Analysis of Variance is the most appropriate test for both the proposed hypothesis and the data collected. (See chapter three for a full review). The main effect of life satisfaction in this analysis, which corresponds to the 'level' in profile analysis confirms hypothesis three (Table 5.7). In addition, there were differences in means of inter-role conflict between the various role combinations (corresponding to 'flatness' in profile analysis), something which has previously been shown in hypothesis two. Moreover, there was an interaction between life satisfaction and inter-role conflict, (corresponding to 'parallelism' in profile analysis) demonstrating that some role combinations produce relatively more inter-role conflict in the low life satisfaction group than in the high life satisfaction group. Inspection of figure 5.4 shows that the difference between the two groups is most marked between the parent and self, and between the work and parent role combination, where greater inter-role conflict is evident for the low life satisfaction group.

SOURCE	D F	M S	D F ERROR	M S ERROR	F	P
(level) LIFE SATISFACTION	1	773.34	78	17.23	44.87	<0.001*
(flatness) ROLE COMBINATION	5	443.80	390	8.32	53.30	<0.001*
(parallelism) LIFE SATISFACTION X ROLE COMBINATION	5	73.07	390	8.32	8.77	<0.001*

* Significant at $p < 0.000001$

Table 5.7: High and low life satisfaction groups with six role combinations.

Figure 5.4 showing the high and low life satisfaction groups on inter-role conflict between all role combinations.

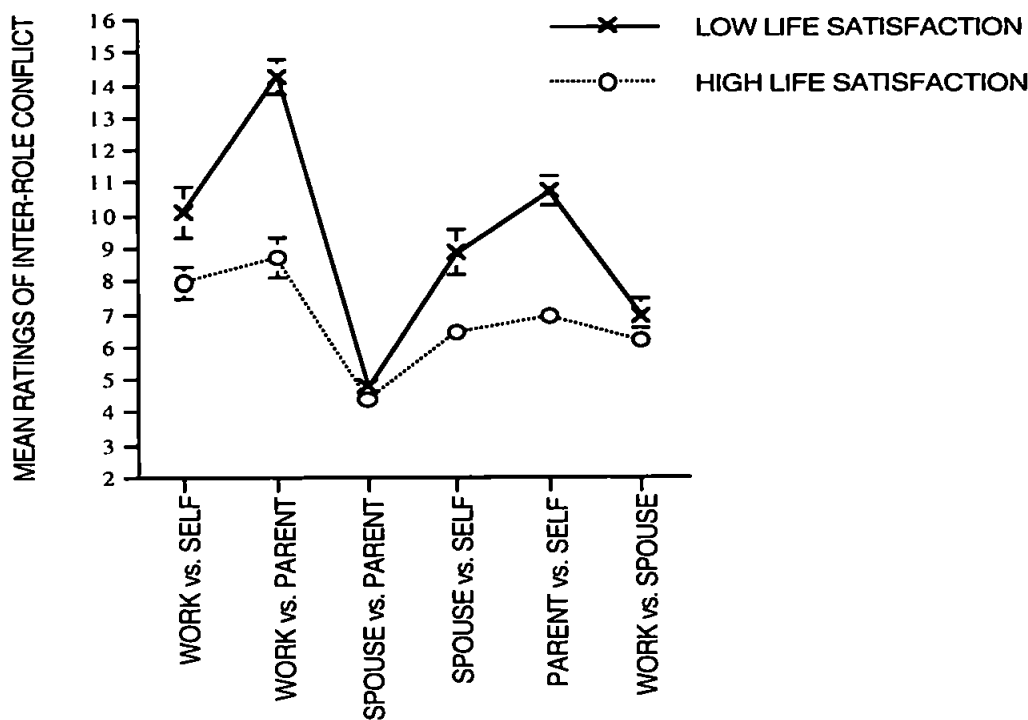


Figure 5.4: Mean ratings of inter-role conflict for high and low life satisfaction groups.

Hypothesis 4: Those with high life satisfaction will report using more problem-focused, fewer emotion-focused, and fewer 'less effective' coping strategies compared with those with low life satisfaction.

A mixed design ANOVA, using life satisfaction as a between subjects factor, coping type as a within subjects factor, and the mean coping scores as the dependent variable will compare the profiles of coping strategies in the two groups to test this hypothesis. Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) point out that profile analysis using Analysis of Variance is the most appropriate test for both the proposed hypothesis and the data collected. (See chapter three for a full review). The main effect of life satisfaction in this analysis, which corresponds to the 'level' term in profile analysis confirms hypothesis four. In addition, there were differences in means of coping strategies in the COPE (corresponding to 'flatness' in profile analysis). There was also an interaction between life satisfaction and coping strategies (corresponding to 'parallelism' in profile analysis) demonstrating

that some coping strategies were differentially related to the low and high life satisfaction groups. Table 5.8 shows a 2 (high/low life satisfaction) x 3 (coping strategies) mixed Analysis of Variance on 80 participants.

SOURCE	D F	M S	D F ERROR	M S ERROR	F	P
(level) LIFE SATISFACTION	1	703.76	78	102.63	6.85	<0.01
(flatness) COPING STRATEGIES	2	2739.18	156	79.42	34.48	<0.001
(parallelism) LIFE SATISFACTION X COPING STRATEGIES	2	1161.83	156	79.42	14.62	<0.001

Table 5.8: Analysis of Variance Table for life satisfaction, coping strategy, and their interaction.

The analysis shows that there was a highly significant interaction between life satisfaction and coping strategy and this can be seen from figure 5.5. As predicted, the high life satisfaction group used more problem-focused, fewer emotion-focused and fewer 'less effective' coping strategies than the low life satisfaction group. Figure 5.5 shows the mean coping scores for high and low life satisfaction groups across the three major coping strategy divisions.

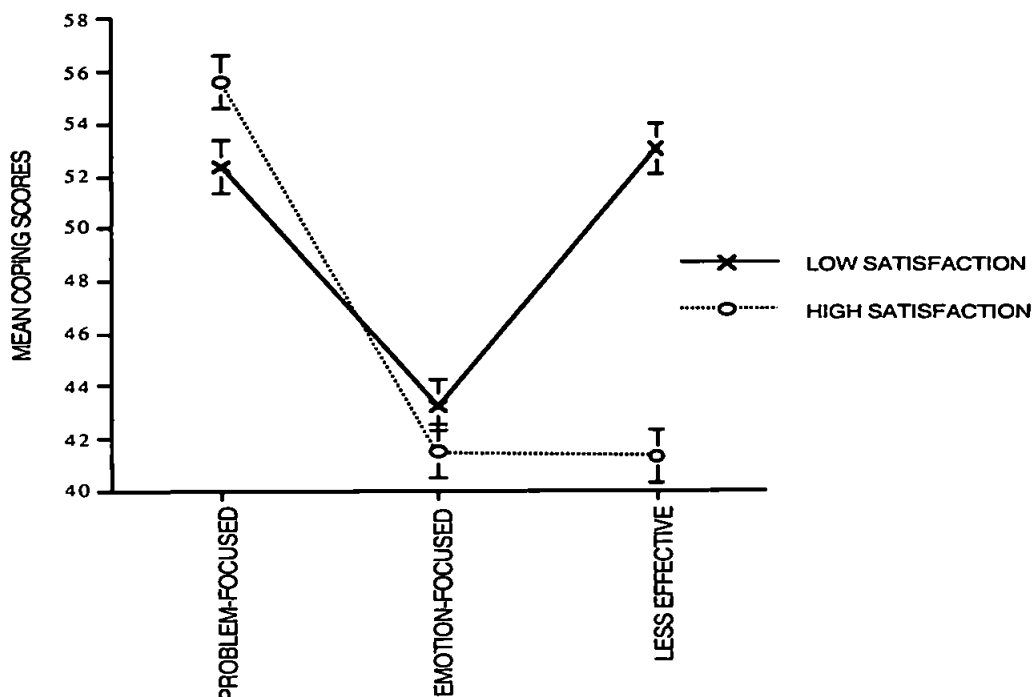


Figure 5.5: Life satisfaction groups on problem-focused, emotion-focused and 'less effective' coping strategies.

A priori analysis (t-test) was used because differences between high and low life satisfaction on coping was predicted. This test shows that there was no significant difference between high and low life satisfaction on problem-focused coping ($t=-1.513$; $df=78$, $p>.01$). Similarly, for emotion-focused coping there were no significant differences between high and low life satisfaction groups ($t=.883$; $df=78$, $p>.01$). However, there was a significant difference on 'less effective' coping for the high and low life satisfaction groups ($t=5.627$; $df = 78$, $p<.01$).

Further a priori analysis using t-test shows that for 'less effective' coping the only significant difference between the high and low life satisfaction occur on mental disengagement ($t=3.368$; $df = 78$, $p<.01$) and not on the other four components of 'less effective' coping. Figure 5.6 shows mean coping scores across the five individual components of 'less effective' coping for both high and low life satisfaction groups.

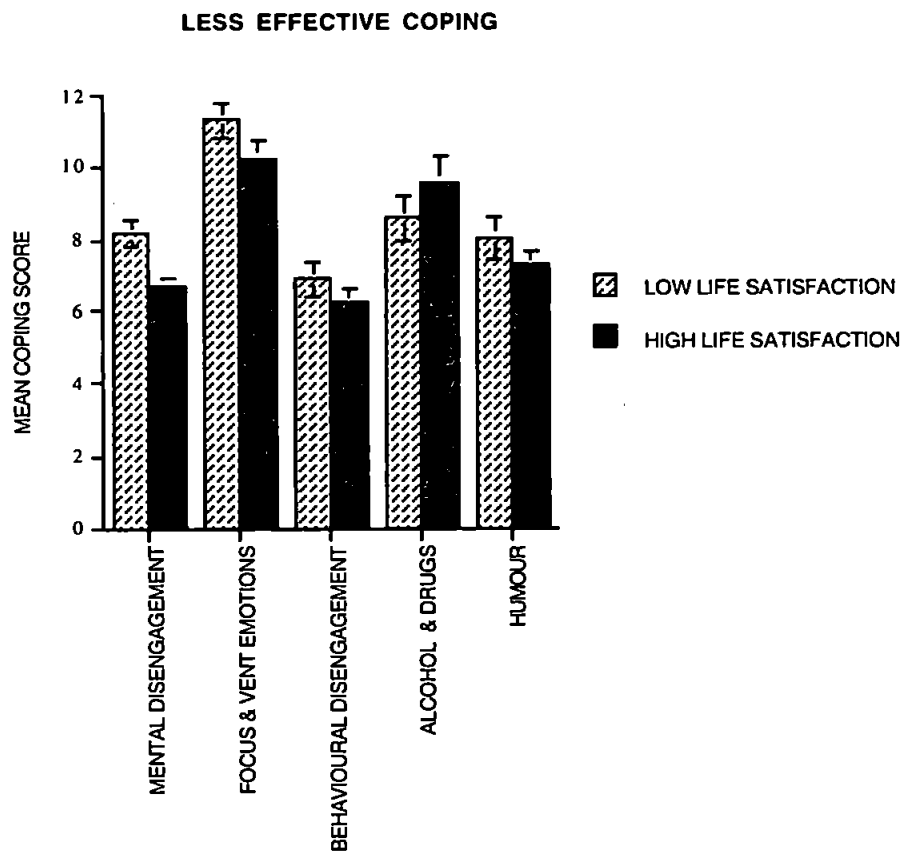


Figure 5.6: Life satisfaction groups on five components of 'less effective' coping.

5.6 Discussion

Hypothesis 1: Those with low life satisfaction will show a bimodal distribution with peaks at less than three role demands and more than three role demands (role demands as derived from the demographic data and not main roles). Those with high life satisfaction will show a unimodal distribution with peaks falling at three role demands

The results shown in figure 5.2 demonstrate that there was no difference in the form of the distribution of role demands between the high and low life satisfaction groups. Further analysis of the data in terms of mean differences in life satisfaction for women with different numbers of role demands, shows that the high role demand group report lower life satisfaction compared to the low and medium role demand groups, who report higher life satisfaction. No significant difference was evident between the low and medium role demand groups in terms of life satisfaction (as both were high). In other words the results show that women who combine the major roles of spouse, parent, self and work, show differential levels of satisfaction depending upon the number of role demands they have.

Much of the research to date has shown different levels of life satisfaction according to whether women are either engaged in employment (Kandal et al 1985), have parental roles (Hochschild 1989), or have 'too many' or 'too few' roles. 'Too many' roles are considered to lead to role strain, which can translate into lower levels of satisfaction. Alternatively, 'too few' roles can also relate to lower levels of satisfaction (Hong and Seltzer 1995). The current study investigated the combination of parent, spouse, worker and self roles and the results help to clarify the issue of 'too many' and 'too few' roles. It is clear from Table 5.2 that mean scores for life satisfaction are higher when up to three role demands are undertaken whereas, they are lower when more than three role demands are undertaken. Role demands in this context, constituted the following; caring for dependants living in the household other than children, returning to paid work only out of financial necessity, having to work part time during a full time study course, and having children under the age of twelve (where each child constitutes one role demand). It is arguable that an individual's life circumstances are comprised of these role demands together with the major roles identified above. The combination of these roles clearly

exert influence upon life satisfaction (Rosenfield 1992) but, the question of whether life circumstances cause and maintain life satisfaction cannot be determined from the data provided.

In conclusion, the results from this study suggest that both the Role Accumulation Hypothesis (Seiber 1974) and the Scarcity Hypothesis (Goode 1960) can be more accurately addressed. The former states that 'well-being' increases as a result of combining additional roles (Hong and Seltzer 1995), without actually specifying how many additional roles are involved. The Scarcity model states that 'satisfaction' is reduced for women who combine many different roles. The results from the current study contribute to both perspectives. For Role accumulation Hypothesis, 'well-being' (conceptualised in terms of high life satisfaction) is high when up to three role demands are combined. For the Scarcity Hypothesis, 'satisfaction' (in terms of life satisfaction) is reduced where an individual acquires four or more role demands. The findings from this study provide novel and important insights into the meaning of 'too many' or 'too few' roles. This study also provides further confirmation of reported levels of life satisfaction with the number of role demands an individual has.

Hypothesis 2: Combining the work and parent roles will lead to the highest levels of reported inter-role conflict, whereas combining the spousal and parental roles will lead to the lowest levels of reported inter-role conflict, compared with all other role combinations.

The results in relation to hypothesis two confirm that the greatest inter-role conflict occurs between the roles of worker and parent. The least inter-role conflict occurs between the roles of spouse and parent (figure 5.3). The first result is in line with the literature, whereas the second result is not. The literature identifies work-family conflict as having associations with health risks (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985), reduced productivity, and high absenteeism (Pleck 1985). The results from the current study suggest that work-family conflict can be more accurately referred to as work-parent conflict and does not include spousal conflict. Therefore, it is possible that work-parent conflict is also associated with reduced productivity, increased health risks and high

absenteeism. Given that the work role is laden with privileges and the parental role is laden with obligations (Karasek 1979), it seems that the two roles are less compatible. Frequently, conditions at work present an individual with demands that have to be met within a restricted period and where these are not completed on time, the individual has to work later or take work home. In both circumstances the work sphere crosses over into the family sphere, taking up the individual's personal and family time. Furthermore the penalties associated with poor productivity at work can increase the risk of jeopardising relations at work so compounding pressure on the individual to complete work-related tasks. Likewise, when an individual is engaged in work-related tasks, there may be call to attend to parental demands which have unexpectedly occurred. For example, if a child becomes ill, the pressure from family responsibilities may cross over into the work sphere. The interdependence of work and family roles (Simons 1995), coupled with other role demands which might occur simultaneously (Hall and Hall 1980), might explain why the greatest degree of conflict was reported between these particular roles.

The results for the second part of the hypothesis suggest that the least amount of inter-role conflict occurs between the spousal and parental roles. It is tempting to conclude that the two roles are in harmony and that demands are compatible, or perhaps salient at different times, but this is not the case. It is with the benefit of interview data that a different interpretation of these results is suggested. It would appear that this finding, of the least amount of conflict between the roles of spouse and parent, is not due to compatibility. Instead, it is suggested that this is the case because much of the time the spousal role is not attended to. Several participants reported that spousal role demands are not perceived to be important enough to cause much conflict when they are combined with the parental role. Consequently, there was little need to register a conflict as such between the two roles. Chassin et al (1985) found similar results for their male sample when conflict between spousal and parental roles was resolved by neglecting the spousal role. However, it is unknown whether husbands in Chassin et al's sample were fully aware of the nature of this conflict. It is possible that participant's husbands in the current study have accepted the parental role demands as needing to be prioritised. If this is the case, the perceived lack of conflict between the spousal and parental roles will be

considered 'normal' and not necessarily problematic. Where the spousal role is combined with other roles (such as the work or self) less inter-role conflict is reported compared to other role combinations. This could be the result of delaying the spousal role, with women putting their marriages on the 'back burner'. The implications of these findings suggest that putting the spousal role on the 'back burner' over time may affect the quality of the marital relationship. If other roles are consistently being met before the spousal role, or if the spousal role is being neglected for long periods of time, it could become problematic. This would have particular consequences for women because, according to Person (1989), if women fail to fulfil their spousal role they may jeopardise their marital relationship and, being 'keepers of marriage', there is a lot of pressure on women not to do that. If the marital relationship is jeopardised, marital satisfaction is reduced and this is likely to have a spill-over effect in reducing both job satisfaction and life satisfaction (Kandal, Davies and Ravies 1985).

In conclusion, the results from this study suggest that Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) finding of inter-role conflict between the work and family roles can be more accurately defined. Work and family incorporates both the paid work domain and the family domains. However, it does not refer to specific family roles that are in conflict with the work role. The results from this study suggest that work-family conflict can be more specifically referred to as the work-spousal role conflict. In considering the family role, this study does not assume that the spousal, parental or self roles comprise of the family role. Furthermore, the data from this study provides an alternative explanation for why the lowest inter-role conflict occurred between the spouse vs parent role combinations. Results suggest that the spousal role is less salient than the other roles, with which it is combined, such as the parental role. According to Simons (1992), strains in salient roles are more threatening to individual well-being than strains in non-salient roles. However, by continuing to prioritise other roles over the spousal role, the individual becomes more susceptible to strain within this domain. This can consequently have spill over effects in other areas of a person's life. Clearly, more information would be required from both spouses in order to elaborate further on these conclusions but this is beyond the scope of the current research.

Hypothesis 3: Those with low life satisfaction scores will show the greatest inter-role conflict over the six role combinations when compared with those with high life satisfaction scores.

Figure 5.4 shows that the low life satisfaction group have consistently more inter-role conflict between all role combinations when compared to the high life satisfaction group. These results are in accordance with Hochschild (1989); Quinn and Allen (1989); and Rachlin (1987), who found that women who fulfil the obligations of both work and home roles, may face higher levels of role strain, and this may translate into lower life satisfaction. On the other hand, those who combine fewer multiple roles report higher levels of life satisfaction and lower psychological distress, presumably because they experience less role strain. The results from the current study also confirm interview reports (from the pilot study) which identified feelings of dissatisfaction when participants experienced role strain and felt that they were not coping to satisfactory standards. Aldermann (1994) found that women who combined the roles of wife, mother and employee had higher life satisfaction than non-employed women. In the current sample, a non-employed group was not used as a comparison. However, all participants combined the same number of roles and still there were differences in reported levels of life satisfaction. It would seem that the difference in life satisfaction may be accounted for by the level of inter-role conflict experienced. In other words, where more inter-role conflict occurs, levels of life satisfaction are lower.

The two life satisfaction groups were not created by random allocation of participants. They were created as 'high' and 'low', according to participant's scores on the life satisfaction questionnaire. Likewise the degree of inter-role conflict was determined by the participants themselves, rather than by the researcher. The analysis employing mean ratings of life satisfaction as the 'independent variable', and inter-role conflict as the 'dependent variable', raises the issue of identifying causation. In other words, is there a causal relationship between inter-role conflict and life satisfaction?

Although it is not possible to confidently conclude that life satisfaction causes inter-role conflict or vice versa, it is evident that factors interacting in the experience and

reporting of inter-role conflict also exert their influence on the reporting of life satisfaction. For example, an individual's underlying personality or their coping strategies may determine how the process of role combinations are managed. Specific personality traits may influence an individual's choice of coping strategies which may determine the degree of inter-role conflict experienced. Likewise, personality traits may influence an individual's outlook in evaluating their own life, which might help determine life satisfaction scores. Therefore, whilst conclusions about life satisfaction causing inter-role conflict or the experience of inter-role conflict causing an individual's life satisfaction are limited, it is possible to identify an interactive process of underlying factors which influence life satisfaction and the experience of inter-role conflict.

It is interesting to note that when the roles of spouse and parent are combined, the difference in conflict for the two groups is much less pronounced than for other role pairs. This suggests that levels of life satisfaction might not be an outcome of conflict between the spousal and parental roles. If participants had perceived conflict between these roles, some association with levels of life satisfaction would be expected, as was the case with other role combinations. For example, there is a marked difference between the high and low life satisfaction groups in terms of conflict between the parental and self roles and this demonstrates that the low life satisfaction group experiences greater inter-role conflict. These results suggest that the self role is distinct from the roles of parent, spouse and worker. It would appear that there is support for Rothman's (1978) claim that what benefits the husband and child doesn't benefit the woman, but whether or not it actually depletes the woman, cannot be determined. Despite this, it is evident that the self role is not completely compatible with either the parental or the spousal role and this is contrary to the traditional view that women obtain total satisfaction from just their parental and spousal roles. It suggests that women require more, and hope to receive this from the self role.

In essence, the results from this study confirm that the low life satisfaction group show greater inter-role conflict between all role combinations compared to those reporting high life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: Those with high life satisfaction will report using more problem-focused, fewer emotion-focused, and fewer 'less effective' coping strategies compared with those with low life satisfaction.

It can be seen from figure 5.5 that there is a difference in the types of coping strategies used according to levels of life satisfaction. Further analysis confirms that the high life satisfaction group are not using significantly more problem-focused coping than the low life satisfaction group. There is also no significant difference between the two groups on emotion-focused coping. However, there is a significant difference between the two groups on 'less effective' coping. Results show that the low life satisfaction group are using more of this type of coping when compared to the high life satisfaction group. These results provide no evidence in support of Fleming et al's (1994) claim that more effective coping strategies, such as problem-focused coping are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction. There is evidence for the notion that coping strategies which are considered to be 'less effective', are more frequently used by the low life satisfaction group. Both the high and low life satisfaction groups showed a clear preference for problem-focused coping, over emotion-focused coping. However, the low life satisfaction group report using as many 'less effective' coping strategies as problem-focused. The high life satisfaction group reported using as much 'less effective' coping as emotion-focused coping and both of these coping strategies were used less than problem focused coping in this group.

Both the high and low life satisfaction groups reported using all three types of coping strategies rather than favouring one or two to the total exclusion of another. This finding suggests that participants are coping by using a large repertoire of responses which according to Folkman (1984) is considered to be optimal coping. Results from the pilot study also suggest that participants used a mixture of coping strategies for inter-role conflict and role overload. Despite this use of all three types of coping strategies, some are clearly preferred over others. For the low life satisfaction group the least preferred coping strategy is emotion-focused. Both problem-focused and 'less effective' coping are preferred more and to the same extent. For the high life satisfaction group, problem-

focused coping is clearly preferred over both the emotion-focused and 'less effective' coping strategies. The latter two are used to the same extent by the high life satisfaction group.

These results present some interesting patterns in that the low life satisfaction group report using an equal amount of problem-focused and 'less effective' coping. The former is considered to be effective and the latter is considered to be maladaptive. In other words, on the one hand the low life satisfaction group report directly tackling the source of stress, but on the other hand they distract or disengage from the stressor. One explanation for this anomaly could be that several of the 'less effective' coping strategies are easily available and serve to temporarily alleviate unpleasant symptoms and this may, in itself, be reinforcing. It could also be that the high use of 'less effective' coping occurs during high levels of role strain when the individual's perceptual field is narrowed to the most obvious coping strategies (Vroom 1966). Those strategies are disengaging cognitively and behaviourally from the source of stress, turning to alcohol and venting emotions. Figure 5.6 shows the difference between the high and low life satisfaction groups on the use of the various 'less effective' coping and it can be seen that the largest difference between the groups is on mental disengagement.

Bolger (1990); Watson, Clark and Carey (1988) have argued that it is possible to use 'less effective' coping strategies which distract the individual from the task at hand but still allow them to perform well because task-oriented efforts (problem-focused) are also increased. This explanation suggests that an individual's coping is a function of their underlying personality and this determines whether one type of coping strategy is preferred over another. This is supported by Amirkhan, Risinger and Swickert (1995) who contend that individuals carry 'person bound' factors from stressor to stressor which influence the choice of coping strategy.

Both the high and low life satisfaction groups report using very few emotion-focused coping strategies in comparison to problem focused-coping strategies. One explanation for this lies in the nature of emotion-focused coping which comprises; seeking emotional

support, increasing religious activities, positively reinterpreting a stressful event, acceptance of a stressor and denial of a stressor. Scores are generally low on religion and seeking emotional support probably because of the lack of emotional support available. This was referred to by a number of participants in the pilot study. The nature of acceptance and denial as emotion-focused coping means that high scores on one might lead to low scores on the other. For example, 'I accept the reality of the fact that it happened', is an item of acceptance. However, 'I refuse to believe that it has happened', is an item of denial. This tendency means that the overall total is likely to be lower for emotion-focused coping when compared to the other two main coping strategies. It is possible that poor or maladaptive coping maintains levels of life satisfaction, and that life satisfaction determines the choice of coping strategy that an individual uses. However, the precise extent of this influence cannot be determined from these results. Nonetheless, there were clear indications from questionnaire and interview data that participants' personalities do influence whether they actively address a stressor or disengage, and whether they deny the stressors reality or accept it. Therefore, it is important to investigate coping strategies further in the context of personality influences. It is also beneficial to investigate the relationship between inter-role conflict and coping, taking into account the role of personality because this would assist in providing a fuller appreciation of the experience of combining multiple roles.

5.6.1 Issues of contention

The results from the current study have presented some useful insights and have helped to clarify some issues in the research on role involvement. However two main points need to be considered in drawing conclusions. Firstly, the sample consisted of women who combined the multiple roles of parent, spouse, worker and self. The worker role consisted of either full time study for 42 participants (and part time paid employment for over 62% of them), and full time paid employment for 38 participants. It is recognised that there may have been personality differences between those individuals who return to education and those individuals who return to paid work. Such personality differences in the worker role may have influenced the relationship between life satisfaction, inter-role conflict and coping. However, given that the nature of the study was to measure

participants combination of multiple roles, this issue of contention detracts little from the overall contents of this study. Nonetheless it would be desirable to control for this additional variable in future work.

Secondly, there is evidence from both questionnaire and interview data that individuals responses are very much influenced by other factors. Whilst it is unrealistic to measure every influence on the individual in order to determine why they respond in the way that they do, it is nonetheless useful to identify key influences. Reference to the interview data reveals statements which cast some light on this question. For example, one participant suggests that habit is an influencing factor:

"I've always done it that way, I don't know why, it's just habit I guess".

Whereas another participant suggests that some underlying personality trait or learned behaviour is more pertinent:

"I'm not that sort of person, I find it hard to ask for support".

There were several references to underlying personality influences which an individual used to account for why they behaved in a particular way, why they had a particular type of outlook, or why they reacted in the way that they did. Although the life satisfaction questionnaire was useful for identifying participants' cognitive and affective evaluation of their life, this measure is to some extent subject to an individual's current mood. It is not possible to determine the extent to which the current mood may have influenced participants usual perceptions of life satisfaction, but individual differences may have helped to cancel out any anomalies. Life satisfaction is also influenced by stable personality factors, whereby the individual may typically respond, for example, with a optimistic or pessimistic view and this would influence further responses (Scheier, Weintraub and Carver 1987). These factors strongly suggest that a more complete picture might be gained from investigating the influence of underlying personality traits and, in particular, how these might influence and shape the way an individual interacts with their environment.

5.6.2 Conclusion

This study provides several insights into research on combining multiple roles. The results suggest that levels of life satisfaction are associated with a particular number of role demands when the roles of parent, spouse, worker and self are combined. The research literature has proposed two main positions where the Scarcity Hypothesis argues that 'too many' roles are disadvantageous to the individual and 'fewer roles' are beneficial. The Role Accumulation Hypothesis proposes that 'too few' roles are disadvantageous and 'many roles' are beneficial. The findings from the current study clarifies the notion of 'too many' and 'too few' roles by suggesting that when the roles of parent, spouse, worker and self are combined, up to three role demands are evident for the high life satisfaction group and more than three role demands are evident for the low life satisfaction group. Therefore any more than three roles in the given context is 'too many'. It is difficult to speculate on 'too few' roles because even one role demand was associated with high life satisfaction.

The results for life satisfaction and role strain suggest that greater inter-role conflict between all role combinations occurs in the low life satisfaction group. The least pronounced difference occurs between the roles of spouse and parent, where similar levels of inter-role conflict are evident. On closer examination, the highest degree of conflict is reported between the roles of worker and parent. The least amount of conflict is reported between the roles of spouse and parent. Explanations for the former result suggest that both roles are often salient simultaneously and are interdependent, even though the work role is laden with privileges and the parental role is often laden with obligations. Given that the penalty for neglecting either role is high, when demands occur at the same time, inter-role conflict is evidently high. In terms of the latter result, interview data suggests that there is little conflict between the spousal and parental roles because these role demands are unlikely to be salient at the same time. Participants are able to prioritise attending to the parental role over the spousal role because the parental role demands are perceived to be more urgent and, in some cases, more important. These findings suggest that continued neglect of the spousal role may lead to

problems in the marital sphere which could escalate into other areas of an individual's life.

At this point attention needs to be drawn to the distinction being made in the thesis between role demands and role combinations. Whilst the influence of the former upon life satisfaction is considered using participants demographic data, the influence of the latter uses a different form of measurement. Role combination is measured using a questionnaire. Therefore, the relationship between role combination and life satisfaction has been tested separately from the relationship between role demands and life satisfaction. Consequently, complex conclusions about the relationship between all three of these variables are difficult to draw and have largely been avoided because they might not be valid.

The coping strategies and life satisfaction results produce some interesting patterns which suggest there are no significant differences between high and low life satisfaction on problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. On 'less effective' coping the low life satisfaction group report greater use of mental disengagement compared with the high life satisfaction group. Both groups report using fewer emotion-focused coping strategies compared with problem-focused, and this was primarily due to the nature of emotion-focused coping which meant that overall totals may have been less compared with the other two coping strategies. The low life satisfaction group also report using as many 'less effective' coping strategies as problem-focused ones. This would suggest that they were using as many coping strategies to disengage from the stressor as they were to actively address the source of their stress. Although these results suggest contradictory responses, it is possible that an individual's personality is playing a significant role in their choice of coping strategies as personality traits were evident in both interview data and questionnaire responses. Therefore it is intended that study three will further examine coping strategies and inter-role conflict. These factors will be considered in the light of whether personality has an influence upon coping and inter-role conflict.

CHAPTER SIX

STUDY THREE

PERSONALITY INFLUENCES IN INTER-ROLE CONFLICT AND COPING STRATEGIES.

6.1 Summary

Study two investigated the relationship between life satisfaction, role demands, coping strategies, and inter-role conflict between the four major roles of parent, spouse, worker and self. The study demonstrates a link between reports of low life satisfaction, high inter-role conflict, four or more role demands, and a tendency to use 'less effective', as well as problem-focused coping strategies. Whilst the life satisfaction measure was useful in identifying these relationships, it is recognised that reported life satisfaction may be prone to influences from underlying personality factors. In other words, reports of high and low life satisfaction, or high and low inter-role conflict, may be substantially influenced by personality factors such as extraversion or neuroticism. Furthermore, the participants reported the use of coping strategies and the experience of inter-role conflict may be significantly associated with personality. This study considers the role of personality in combining multiple roles and the preferred use of coping strategies. The results show that the high neuroticism group experience more inter-role conflict between all role combinations, compared to the low neuroticism group, and these results were in accordance with expectations. However, contrary to expectations, there was no effect of extraversion in either the combination of multiple roles or in the reported use of coping strategies. It was expected that the low neuroticism group would report using more problem-focused and fewer 'less effective' coping strategies compared to the high neuroticism group, and the results confirm this. However the low neuroticism group were also expected to use fewer emotion-focused coping strategies compared with the high neuroticism group, but the results suggest that the opposite is the case.

6.2 Introduction

Firstly, consideration will be given to operational definitions. Inter-role conflict was defined in study one as consisting of incompatible demands, or the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures, such that the incompatibility with one role would make compliance with the other more difficult (Kahn et al 1964). The definition of inter-role conflict used in this study remains the same, as does the measure of inter-role conflict which is also the same as that used in study two. Coping strategies were defined in study two as those cognitive and behavioural efforts used by an individual to reduce the effects of stress (Flemming et al 1994). These strategies have been measured using the Cope inventory (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989) and this measure is retained as appropriate for this study.

There are as many definitions of personality as there are ways of measuring it and it is clearly beyond the scope of this introduction to review them all. Indeed, a relevant review has already been presented earlier in this thesis. There is fairly widespread agreement amongst psychologists working in the area of individual differences that the 'big five' personality dimensions are the most useful in terms of the operational measurement of personality (Kline 1993). These big five domains include Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to experience (O), Agreeableness (A) and Conscientiousness (C). Whilst all five domains were measured for this study, results in relation to openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness are not presented because they did not show any significant effect and the data was therefore reanalysed without them. This was done in order to concentrate on the effects of those variables which do have an effect upon the experience of role strain and coping.

The two personality factors which are of interest in terms of their relationship with inter-role conflict and coping strategies are neuroticism and extraversion. Each of these factors will be discussed in turn. Neuroticism is a continuum running from high to low, with relatively few people scoring at the extreme ends of the scale and the majority falling in the middle range. Neuroticism is considered to be a function of the autonomic nervous system and has its basis in the limbic system (Kline 1993). Individuals scoring

high on the neuroticism scale tend to have very unstable autonomic nervous systems which react powerfully to unpleasant or powerful stimuli. A high scorer on the neuroticism scale is defined by McCrae and Costa (1989) as anxious, generally apprehensive, and prone to worry. This individual often gets angry with others and experiences embarrassment or shyness when dealing with strangers. The high scorer on the neuroticism scale is impulsive and is generally unable to handle stress well (McCrae and Costa 1990). Eysenck and Eysenck (1991) identified these individuals as worriers who are preoccupied with things which might go wrong. Furthermore, they are described as having strong emotional reactions which interfere with proper adjustment, sometimes leading the individual to react in an irrational rigid way. They also stated that the individual high on neuroticism experiences a high degree of negative emotions and is unable to quickly get back on an even keel. As such these individuals are more susceptible to distress than those who score low on this scale. 'Distress' in this context is defined as:

*" a set of strain symptoms resulting from ineffective coping mechanisms and is composed of physiological, psychological or behavioural symptoms" .
(Matuszek, Nelson and Quick 1995 p.102).*

The other end of this continuum is characterised by those individuals who score low on neuroticism and are generally termed 'emotionally stable'. They are usually calm, even tempered, relaxed and able to face stressful situations without becoming upset (McCrae and Costa 1989b). Eysenck and Eysenck (1991) wrote that they tend to respond emotionally only slowly and generally weakly and they also demonstrate the capacity to return to base-line quickly after emotional arousal. As such this individual is usually controlled and unworried.

Extraversion is also a continuum which runs from high to low, with the majority of people scoring in the middle range. A high score on the extraversion continuum would classify an individual as extravert. Extraverts are described as cortically under aroused and consequently seek stimulation to maintain cortical arousal at an optimal level. They are often described as being affectionate, talkative, active and passionate. Extraversion is the tendency to be out-going and sociable. Those with high scores on the extraversion scale are said to like parties, have many friends, need to have people to talk to, crave

excitement, take chances and are generally impulsive. He or she also likes change, tends to be carefree, easy-going, optimistic and likes to 'laugh and be merry' (Eysenck and Eysenck 1991). Research on personality suggests that extraverts report few problems in their lives, they tend to experience life positively with consequent benefit to health (Watson and Clark 1992). Alternatively, a low score on the extraversion continuum classifies an individual as an introvert. This individual is described as cortically over aroused and therefore tries to avoid stimulation to keep arousal levels to a comfortable level (Eysenck and Eysenck 1991). Costa and McCrae (1991) refer to the introvert's profile as one that is less easy to portray, compared with the extravert. However, they do emphasise that introversion should be seen as the absence of extraversion, rather than what might be assumed to be its opposite. For example, introverts are reserved rather than unfriendly, independent rather than followers. Introverts do not necessarily suffer from social anxiety and they are not unhappy or pessimistic. Costa and McCrae also cite earlier research in support of these claims, such as Costa and McCrae (1980).

Watson, Clark, McIntyre and Hamaker (1992); Larsen and Ketelaar (1991) amongst others (Tellegen 1985) have demonstrated the existence of a strong affective component in the personality traits of neuroticism and extraversion. In other words neuroticism and extraversion represent basic dimensions of emotional temperament which broadly reflect individual differences in terms of the propensity to experience negative and positive affect. Negative affectivity (NA) is the propensity for viewing life pessimistically and negatively (Watson and Clark 1992; Matuzek et al 1995). It is associated with states such as low self esteem, sadness, frustration, and increased reports of subjective distress, but not with objective health indicators (Watson and Pennebaker 1989). There is also evidence that people higher in NA recall more unpleasant information (Smith and Williams 1992), and are slower to recover from problems than people low in NA (Marco and Suls 1993). Its greatest impact is in psychological and physical strain and it is therefore highly associated with perceptions of decreased control (Decker and Borgen 1993; Ball, Trevino and Sims 1994). Measures of negative affect are strongly related to neuroticism but unrelated to extraversion. Affect covaries within and across individuals, and may also be related to different classes of variables. For example, the negative affect

dimension reflects co-occurrence among negative mood states, so that those individuals who report feeling irritable also report feeling nervous, sad and guilty. Positive affect is related to extraversion but not to neuroticism, usually being associated with optimism, enthusiasm, friendliness, and dominance. Individuals high on positive affect show high associations with self esteem, assertiveness, happiness and health (Scheier and Carver 1987; Berenbaum and Williams 1995).

Given the associated affect in both neuroticism and extraversion, the implication is that individuals are susceptible to react in specific ways to stressful situations. An individual who scores high on the neuroticism scale may be more prone to pessimistic appraisals because difficulties or stressful situations may be seen as insurmountable. Many situations which are stressful may be anticipated because of the propensity to worry, and because of the general tendency to be preoccupied with distress. Certainly the evidence suggests that those high on neuroticism are more vulnerable to stress, and experience comparatively high levels of distress (Bolger and Eckenrode 1991). Ormel and Wohlfarth (1991) have argued that the high level of distress experienced is largely due to temperamental dispositions and not to environmental factors. Bolger and Schillings (1991) argue that reactivity is also important in relation to reported levels of distress. In other words, an individual scoring high on the neuroticism scale may experience greater conflict between role combinations as a result of their reaction rather than the actual exposure to conflicting roles. This individual is likely to perceive the situation as stressful and consequently react to it negatively and powerfully. It is still unclear exactly why an individual scoring high on neuroticism becomes so distressed. Speculations have ranged from biological explanations (Eysenck 1953) to environmental factors (Watson and Clark 1984). It is possible that individuals high on neuroticism are more likely to create or be involved in social environments in which stressful encounters are relatively frequent (Ormel and Wohlfarth 1991).

Individuals high on neuroticism are more likely to appraise a situation as stressful and therefore overreact to it when compared to those scoring low on neuroticism. In contrast, individuals who score high on the extraversion scale, will appraise situations in

accordance with their underlying positive affect. Certainly the research literature suggests that these individuals react positively and optimistically to change and difficult situations, which could be perceived as stressful (Bolger and Eckenrode 1991). The underlying positive affect in extraversion would mean that stressful situations are not perceived as insurmountable but as challenges which are manageable and controllable. Moreover, the perceived social support associated with the extravert may act as a stress-buffer to experiences which are negative (Berenbaum and Williams 1995). With regards to combining multiple roles and the influence of extraversion, it would be expected that individuals who score high on extraversion will appraise situations of conflict between roles in a positive and optimistic manner. Therefore, the reported inter-role conflict should be much less than it is for individuals with lower positive affect, namely those individuals who score low on the extraversion scale.

When multiple roles are combined there are two ways in which personality can have an effect. Firstly, personality might explain why some individuals experience inter-role conflict more than others. For example, by anticipating and preventing the occurrence of inter-role conflict, the individual can actively control levels of distress caused by the conflict between roles (Bolger 1990). Secondly, underlying personality dimensions may determine how an individual is going to react once inter-role conflict has occurred. Clearly, it follows that if appraisals of stressful situations are dependent upon personality, as suggested by Peacock and Wong (1996), then appraisals of situations are going to be different for individuals who score high or low on neuroticism and extraversion. Following appraisals, the reported usage of coping strategies will also be expected to be different.

The personality dimension neuroticism is found to be consistently related to specific coping strategies which are unrelated to extraversion (Carver et al 1989). The most commonly identified coping strategies for individuals high on neuroticism are often considered to be maladaptive or 'less effective'. For example, coping by avoidance, hostility or withdrawal. Deary, Blenkin, Agius and Endler (1996) found that their sample of doctors used coping strategies and appraisals according to their underlying

personality, so that those scoring high on neuroticism used emotion-oriented coping strategies (emotion-focused). These individuals also reported negative appraisals and high levels of job stress. Similarly, O'Brien and Delongis (1996); Wearing and Hart (1996) found that individuals high on neuroticism reported using more emotion-focused coping such as accepting responsibility (self blame). They also reported using fewer problem-focused coping strategies involving planning when compared to those individuals who scored low on neuroticism. One of the hallmarks of neuroticism is that those who score high on this trait tend to experience more emotional distress than those with low neuroticism scores (Watson and Clark 1984, 1992). Therefore, they may need to use more emotion-focused coping in order to control and reduce their distress. However, individuals who score low on neuroticism do not experience high levels of distress and they do not react emotionally to stressful situations. It would follow then, that these individuals do not need to use as many emotion-focused coping strategies as do those individuals who score high on neuroticism.

When problems are perceived as insurmountable by individuals high on neuroticism, certain specific coping strategies are preferred, such as avoidance and disengagement. However, where situations are perceived as changeable for the better, individuals attempt to elicit active problem solving responses. With those situations which are appraised as less changeable, individuals use emotion-focused coping because they serve to control distressing emotions (Houtman and Bakker 1991). The classic work of Lazarus (1980) considered coping as a method of self regulation. Through the act of coping the individual regulates the body's reactions to emotions and, because emotions are not constant, the body must regularly readjust to emotional changes. Coping, according to Lazarus is also anticipatory so that individuals prepare themselves for the likely occurrence of strains and demands. This type of preparation can subsequently change the nature of the interaction between the person and the environment, so that appraisals are less threatening. However, anticipation can also exacerbate the stress response in spite of coping efforts, particularly so in individuals who are high on neuroticism, because of their tendency to be preoccupied with distress. Although there is much support to suggest that individuals who score highly on neuroticism use avoidance and distraction

coping strategies, Bolger and Schilling (1991) found that this distraction did not impair their performance. This was because individuals high on neuroticism compensated for their distress by increasing problem-focused coping. Bolger and Schilling also found that problem-focused coping can lead to increased anxiety and suggested that this may be due to taking direct action, which entails having to focus on the problem, therefore making the problem more salient. However, Ptacek, Smith and Dodge (1994) suggested that individuals who cope actively in stressful situations tend to show a negative relationship to depression.

Extraversion is consistently related to adaptive and effective responses such as rational, restraint and positive coping strategies (Costa and McCrae 1990). In extraversion, the optimism allows perceptions of stressful situations to be positive and perceived as challenges which are welcome. This allows the extravert individual to feel in control and able to act constructively, therefore increasing the motivation to use effective and constructive coping strategies which deal with the source of the stress. Another explanation is that individuals high on extraversion have greater social support than those low on extraversion and this support may serve to make some problems more manageable. Scheier, Weintraub and Carver (1986) further argue that the controllability of an event plays an essential role in whether or not the extravert uses approach (direct) or avoidance coping strategies. They found that optimists (associated with high extraversion scores) were less likely to disengage from a stressor unless the situation was perceived as uncontrollable. However, Hobfoll (1988) argues that this very tactic may work to preserve the extravert's high level of optimism. In essence there is abundant evidence to suggest that high scores on extraversion are associated with problem focused coping, such as support seeking and positive appraisals. (Wearing and Hart 1996; Deary, Blenkin, Agius and Endler 1996; O'Brien and DeLongis 1996). However, high scores on extraversion and emotion-focused coping are negatively associated. This is particularly the case for the coping strategy 'accepting responsibility' which essentially refers to self blame (Hooker, Frazier and Monahan 1994).

In summary, a pattern emerges which demonstrates a relationship between personality influences and associations with environmental factors. These appear to interact to produce appraisals of events. Situations are differentially perceived as stressful depending on personality factors and therefore produce different levels of distress in individuals. Those individuals who score high on the neuroticism scale report experiencing higher levels of distress compared to individuals who score low on the neuroticism scale. It would follow that these individuals will be expected to report greater strain as measured by inter-role conflict between role combinations when compared to individuals who have low scores on neuroticism. Similarly, individuals who are high on the extraversion scale have the advantage of high levels of positive affect which influences their interactions with their environment. The positive affect, and the high level of sociability might influence how an individual appraises events which are potentially stressful. If a positive and optimistic outlook appraises events as challenges, then the distress experienced should be much less than if the appraisal were that of threat. The lower the score on the extraversion scale, the lower the level of positive affect. Therefore, an individual with high scores on the extraversion scale should report lower strain as measured by inter-role conflict, than individuals who score low on the extraversion scale. Consequently, with regards to neuroticism and extraversion and their relationship to inter-role conflict, the following hypotheses are proposed:

6.3 Hypotheses

1a. Those with high neuroticism scores (as measured by the NEO-FFI) will show greater inter-role conflict between all role combinations compared with those with low neuroticism scores.

1b. Those with low extraversion scores (as measured by the NEO-FFI) will show greater inter-role conflict between all role combinations compared with those with high extraversion scores.

Overall two distinct pictures are suggested, one of the individual high on neuroticism and another of the individual high on extraversion. The main difference relates to the perceived experience of stressful events and the coping strategies which are normally associated with these personalities. For the individual high on neuroticism, the

experience of distress is high and intense, and problems are often perceived as too big to handle. Therefore, coping strategies may reflect attempts to manage the problem by avoidance coping and by attempting to reduce the distressing emotions, rather than attempting to resolve the problem. On the other hand, much of the literature reviewed has suggested that the individual high on extraversion tends to experience low levels of distress. When problems do arise and coping strategies are used, they are frequently those which deal directly with the source of the problem, rather than the distressing emotions. Certainly, if the individual high on extraversion feels able to take direct action and confront the stressor, then there is no need for avoidance coping, unless the problem is perceived as uncontrollable (Carver et al 1989). In this regard the following hypothesis is proposed:

2. Extraversion will be positively correlated with problem-focused coping and negatively correlated with emotion-focused coping and with 'less effective' coping.

There are several differences between individuals high on neuroticism and those who are low on neuroticism. Individuals who are high on this scale generally experience more negative emotional reactions to those events which are perceived as stressful. Some of the reactions associated with these individuals are those of sadness, guilt, anxiety and anger. However, the individuals scoring low on neuroticism tend to react in an unemotional way and are able to return to base-line quickly after emotional arousal. It would follow that if individuals high on neuroticism were unable to handle stress well, as suggested by Eysenck and Eysenck (1991), they would not take direct action to tackle the source of the problem in the same way as those who score low on this scale. Instead, emotion-focused coping strategies would be deployed to allow those individuals high on neuroticism to attempt to control and reduce their distress to some extent, whereas avoidance or 'less effective' coping strategies would serve to protect these individuals from having to deal with the source of the problem. Given this supposition, the following hypotheses are proposed:

3a. Neuroticism will be negatively correlated with problem-focused coping and positively correlated with emotion-focused coping and with 'less effective' coping.

3b. Those with low neuroticism scores will use more problem-focused coping, fewer emotion-focused coping and fewer 'less effective' coping strategies compared with those with high neuroticism scores

Although the second hypothesis is an alternative approach to the first, it nevertheless provides for a triangulated approach, because it allows further investigation into the precise effects of high and low neuroticism to coping.

6.4 Method

6.4.1 Participants

Participants were all female and recruited from several different courses at a local university. Sixty three female students aged between 23-51 (mean age 33.4 years, S.D. 3.7) combined the roles of 'spouse', 'wife', 'worker' and 'self', of this participant group, 74% were also engaged in part time paid work, or paid work during vacation breaks.

6.4.2 Procedure

Initially, questionnaires were distributed to two groups of women. Those who combine the multiple roles of spouse, parent and worker and those who were single (without a partner), and who did not have a child. Questionnaires measured several different variables such as life satisfaction, constructive thinking, psychological distress and the big five personality factors of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Data was also collected on hassles and uplifts, symptomatology, inter-role conflict, coping strategies and personalities. However, the focus of attention is on inter-role conflict, coping strategies and personality amongst women who combined multiple roles and, consequently, the additional measures will not be used in this study.

Subjects were contacted by poster advertisements, announcements at the end of lectures, letters, and by offering 'participation points'. These are points required from students by their own course which demonstrate participation in psychological studies. Those participants who demonstrated an interest were given a series of questionnaires and their names, course, and year of study was recorded. Participants completed questionnaires in their own time and returned them either by post or by hand soon after. In many cases, several reminders to participants were required. A return rate of approximately 97% was achieved but only those questionnaires which were accurate, and completed in all parts, were used for the analysis. For the purpose of comparisons between groups, scores on neuroticism were divided according to the mean (mean = 22.11, S.D. = 10.45, range of participants scores = 6 - 39). Scores above the mean created the 'high'

neuroticism group and scores below the mean created the 'low' neuroticism group. Similarly, scores on the extraversion scale were divided according to the mean (mean = 26.85, S.D. = 10.17, range of participants scores = 10-45). Scores above the mean created the 'high' extraversion group and scores below the mean created the 'low' extraversion group.

6.4.3 Measures

The questionnaires used for the analysis measured three different variables. Firstly, they measured inter-role conflict for the major roles of parent, worker, spouse and self (Holahan and Gilbert 1979), using the same questionnaire which was used in study two. Secondly, a measure was taken of typically used coping strategies, using the Cope Inventory (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989) which was also used in study two. Descriptions of what these questionnaires measure have already been detailed in study two, and therefore no further explanation is required here. Thirdly, personality was assessed by the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa and McCrae 1989). Each of the 60 items were rated on a 5-point scale, from a score of 0 representing 'strongly disagree' to a score of 4 representing 'strongly agree'. The inventory assesses five personality dimensions: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (appendix 8). Details regarding the inventory are provided in chapter three. Demographic data was collected from all participants and included details of age, income, year of study, number and age of children, spouse's employment status and current position, dependent relatives and the types of social support available (appendix 7).

6.5 Results

Hypothesis 1a: suggests that those with high neuroticism scores will show greater inter-role conflict between all role combinations compared with those with low neuroticism scores.

A mixed design ANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. Neuroticism (high or low level) was used as a between subjects factor, type of role combination as a within subjects factor and inter-role conflict as the dependent variable. This design compares the profiles of inter-role conflict between role combinations in the high and low neuroticism groups. Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) suggest that this is the most appropriate test for the proposed hypothesis and the data collected (see chapter three for a full review). The main effect of personality in this analysis, which corresponds to the 'level' in profile analysis confirms hypothesis 1a. Table 6.1 shows a 2 (high/low neuroticism) X 6 (role combinations) mixed Analysis of Variance on 63 participants.

SOURCE	D F	M S	D F ERROR	M S ERROR	F	P
(level) NEUROTICISM	1	567.81	61	59.17	9.59	<0.005
(flatness) ROLE COMBINATION	5	397.18	305	9.96	39.85	<0.001
(parallelism) NEUROTICISM X ROLE COMBINATION	5	1.53	305	9.96	.154	>0.05

Table 6.1: Analysis of Variance Table for neuroticism and inter-role conflict.

Figure 6.1 shows the profiles of high and low neuroticism on pairs of role combination.

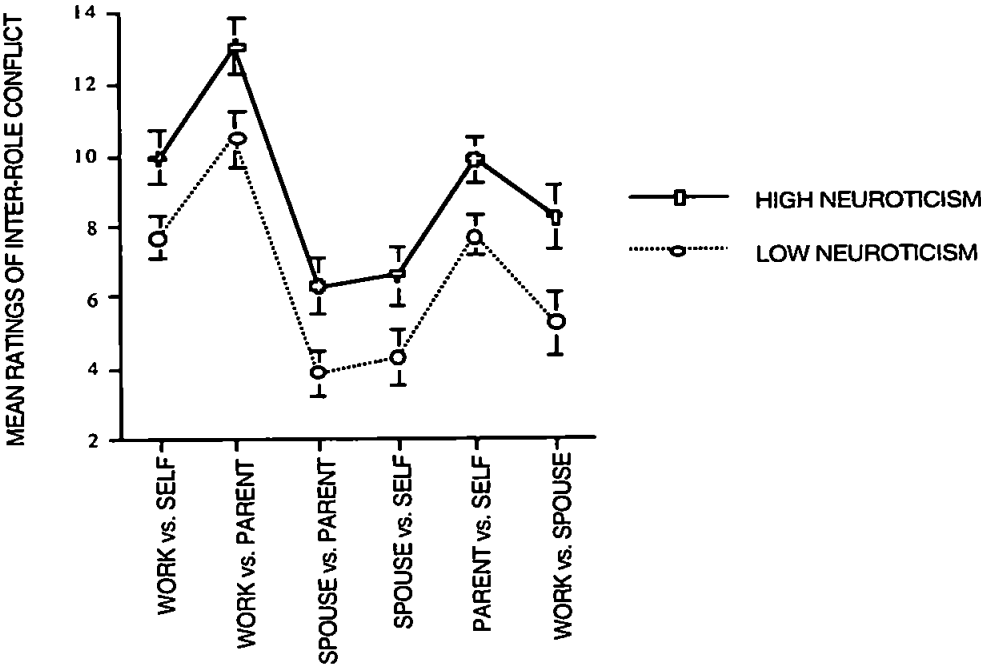


Figure 6.1: Mean ratings of inter-role conflict for high and low neuroticism groups.

Hypothesis 1b: suggests that those with low extraversion scores will show greater inter-role conflict between all role combinations compared to those with high extraversion scores.

A mixed design ANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. Extraversion (high or low level) was used as a between subjects factor, type of role combination as a within subjects factor, and inter-role conflict as the dependent variable. This design will compare the profiles of inter-role conflict between role combinations in the high and low extraversion groups. Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) would refer to these results as the difference in 'level', which corresponds to the main effect of personality in this analysis. Table 6.2 shows a 2 (high/low extraversion) X 6 (role combinations) mixed Analysis of Variance on sixty three participants. The results of this analysis suggest that there are no significant differences between level of extraversion (high or low) or between level of extraversion and reported inter-role conflict between role combinations (parallelism).

SOURCE	D F	M S	D F ERROR	M S ERROR	F	P
(level) EXTRAVERSION	1	14.89	61	43.99	0.33	>0.05
(flatness) ROLE COMBINATION	5	267.31	305	7.59	35.21	<0.001
(parallelism) EXTRAVERSION X ROLE COMBINATION	5	8.29	305	7.59	1.09	>0.05

Table 6.2: Analysis of Variance Table for extraversion and inter-role conflict.

Hypothesis 2: Extraversion will be positively correlated with problem-focused coping and negatively correlated with emotion-focused coping and with 'less effective' coping.

A Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to test this hypothesis, using 63 participants (Table 6.3). None of the predicted correlations were significant.

	PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING	EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING	LESS EFFECTIVE COPING
EXTRAVERSION	.026	.027	-.050
n	63	63	63
p value	>0.05	>0.05	>0.05

Table 6.3: Correlations between extraversion and coping strategies.

In order to test hypothesis 3a: Neuroticism will be negatively correlated with problem-focused coping and positively correlated with emotion-focused coping and with 'less effective' coping.

A Pearson's Product Moment correlation was used to test this hypothesis, using 63 participants (Table 6.4). As predicted, there was a significant and negative correlation between neuroticism and problem-focused coping. However although the correlation between neuroticism and emotion-focused coping was significant, this was not in the predicted direction. Neuroticism and 'less effective' coping showed a significant positive correlation as predicted.

	PROBLEM-FOCUSED COPING	EMOTION-FOCUSED COPING	LESS EFFECTIVE COPING
NEUROTICISM	-.708	-.682	.837
n	63	63	63
p value	<0.0005	<0.0005	<0.0005

Table 6.4: Correlations between neuroticism and coping strategies.

3b. Those with low neuroticism scores will use more problem-focused coping, fewer emotion-focused coping and fewer 'less effective' coping strategies compared with those with high neuroticism scores.

A mixed design ANOVA was used to test this hypothesis. Neuroticism (high or low level) was used as a between subjects factor, coping type as a within subjects factor, and the mean coping scores as the dependent variable. This design will compare the profiles of inter-role conflict between role combinations in the high and low neuroticism groups. Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) suggest that this is the most appropriate test for the proposed hypothesis and the data collected (see chapter three for a full review). The main effect of personality in this analysis, which corresponds to the 'level' in profile analysis, confirms hypothesis 3b (Table 6.5). There were also differences in means between coping strategies (corresponding to 'flatness') in profile analysis (see figure 6.2).

Table 6.5 shows a 2 (high/low neuroticism) X 3 (coping strategies) mixed Analysis of Variance on 63 participants.

SOURCE	D F	M S	D F ERROR	M S ERROR	F	P
(level) NEUROTICISM	1	967.54	61	76.64	12.62	<0.001
(flatness) COPING STRATEGIES	2	5060.95	122	51.83	97.63	<0.001
(parallelism) NEUROTICISM X COPING STRATEGIES	2	7109.92	122	51.83	137.16	<0.001

Table 6.5: Analysis of Variance Table for neuroticism, coping strategies and their interaction.

The analysis shows that there was a highly significant interaction (corresponding to 'parallelism' in profile analysis) between neuroticism and coping strategies as seen from figure 6.2. As predicted, this figure shows the low neuroticism group to be using more problem-focused coping when compared to the high neuroticism group. However, the low neuroticism group are using more emotion-focused coping than the high neuroticism group. This appears to be an anomalous result. As predicted the low neuroticism group are using fewer 'less effective' coping strategies when compared to the high neuroticism group. Figure 6.2 shows high and low neuroticism groups and three levels of coping strategies.

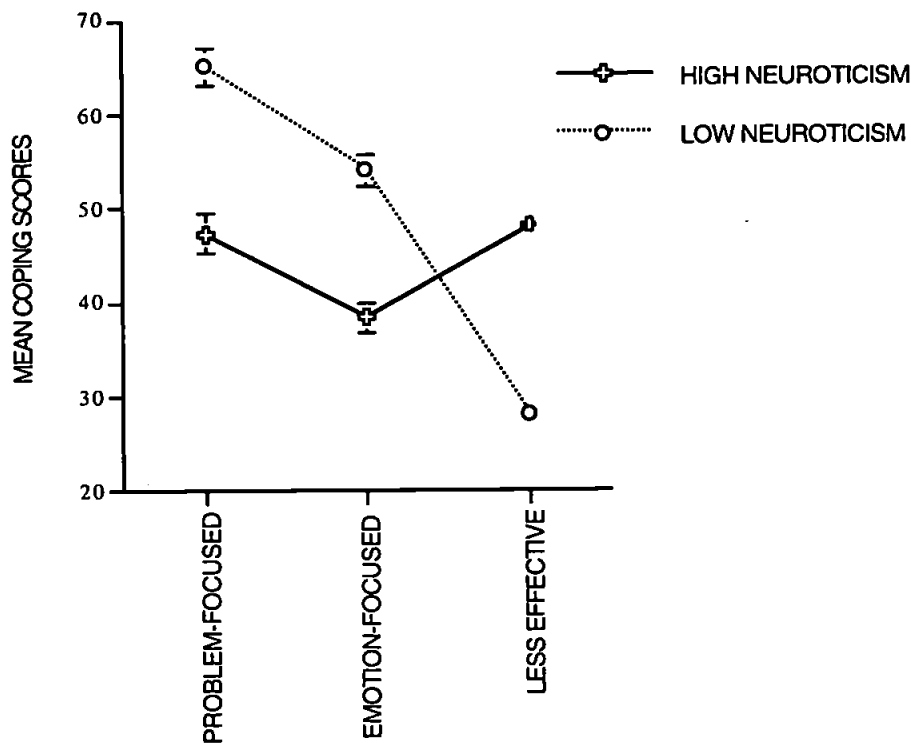


Figure 6.2: Neuroticism groups on problem-focused, emotion-focused and 'less effective' coping strategies.

A priori follow up analysis (t-test) shows that there were significant differences between high and low neuroticism groups on problem-focused coping ($t=7.711$; $df=61$ $p<.0005$), emotion-focused coping ($t=7.835$; $df=61$ $p<.0005$) and 'less effective' coping ($t= -13.86$; $df=61$ $p<.0005$). Further analysis using t-test shows differences between the high and low neuroticism groups on 'active' coping ($t=2.071$; $df=61$ $p<.05$) and 'planning' ($t=2.112$; $df=61$ $p<.05$) in problem-focused coping. Within emotion-focused

coping, significant differences were apparent on 'positive reinterpretation and growth' ($t=3.323$; $df=61$ $p<.005$). Within 'less effective' coping the significant difference between the high and low neuroticism occurred on behavioural disengagement ($t=-3.189$; $df=61$ $p<.005$).

6.6 Discussion

Hypothesis 1a: Those with high neuroticism scores will show greater inter-role conflict between all role combinations compared with those with low neuroticism scores.

The results in figure 6.1 show that there are significant differences between high and low neuroticism groups on conflict between pairs of role combinations. As predicted, the high neuroticism group showed more inter-role conflict on all role combinations. It was expected that, because individuals have different appraisals depending upon whether they are high or low on the neuroticism scale, they would report differential levels of inter-role conflict given that this is a measure of strain. According to Peacock and Wong (1996), appraisals of stressful situations are dependent upon personality. Certainly these results would suggest that although all participants combined at least four major roles, the high neuroticism group experienced greater inter-role conflict than the low neuroticism group. It is possible that the high neuroticism group experience greater inter-role conflict because individuals who score high on neuroticism tend to react emotionally to any difficulties they encounter and therefore, they report a greater prevalence of such difficulties. It is also possible, although less likely, that the high neuroticism group actually did encounter more inter-role conflict. However, this is seen as less likely because Watson and Clark (1992) reported that high levels of subjective distress were reported by individuals high in negative affectivity, related to neuroticism, and that this was not associated with objective measures. Therefore, the difference in the high and low neuroticism groups on inter-role conflict is more likely to have been as a result of reporting conflict between roles and not as a result of the actual experience of inter-role conflict. Alternatively, it is possible that individuals high on neuroticism do actually experience more inter-role conflict because as Ormal and Wohlfarth (1991) report, these individuals are more likely to create or be involved in social environments in which particular types of strains, such as inter-role conflict, occur frequently.

It is also feasible that for individual's high on neuroticism, it is more than just their social environment which creates inter-role conflict. Much of this could be attributed to their unstable autonomic nervous systems. Any reaction to unpleasant stimuli is likely to be powerful and negative and this is often prolonged so that the individual is unable to get

back on an even keel. Those who are high on neuroticism also have a tendency to worry about things that might go wrong, and increased awareness may actually make them more sensitive to any degree of conflict between roles. Furthermore, they are likely to recall more unpleasant information (Smith and Williams 1992) and this may also influence greater recall and reporting of conflict between roles. On the other hand, individuals who are low on neuroticism may be less sensitive to small amounts of conflict between their various roles, partly because they are not as apprehensive, anxious, or prone to worry. Consequently, they do not react emotionally when conflict occurs and therefore experiences are not regarded as salient or perceived as problematic.

It is interesting that the profiles of inter-role conflict for individuals high on neuroticism are consistently greater for all role combinations than they are for the low neuroticism group. This would suggest that the general tendency to worry about and report greater inter-role conflict is equally distributed as being greater amongst all role combinations. Nonetheless, figure 6.1 suggests that for both groups, the greatest inter-role conflict occurs between the roles of work vs parent and the lowest inter-role conflict occurs amongst the roles of spouse vs parent. This pattern of results was also evident in study two. The results from study two suggested that, despite personality differences in the degree of inter-role conflict experienced, participants who combine the roles of spouse, parent, work and self, report greater conflict between some roles over others. It would seem that the work and parental roles can be regarded as the most conflicting, probably because both are salient simultaneously (Hall and Hall 1980). The demands from each role are very different and their interdependence may make them more susceptible to conflict (Karasek 1979). The lowest conflict occurs between the spouse and parental roles. The explanation offered for this in study two remains the same. In other words, participants were attending to the parental role over and above the spousal role because the demands of the parental role were considered to be more urgent. Given that participants always demonstrated giving priority to the parental role, there was little need to perceive a conflict between these two roles.

Hypothesis 1b: Those with low extraversion scores will show greater inter-role conflict between all role combinations compared with those with high extraversion scores.

The results in Table 6.2 show that there are no significant differences between levels of extraversion and inter-role conflict. In other words, the low extraversion group did not report greater inter-role conflict compared to the high extraversion group. The extraversion dimension has the underlying component of positive affect. This is reported to be higher amongst those individuals who score high on the extraversion scale than amongst those who score lower on this scale. The high positive affect enables individuals to view their environments in a positive and optimistic way and this influences appraisals, so that situations are perceived as manageable and less threatening than they would be for individuals who have lower positive affect. The added sociability factor amongst individuals high on extraversion, would also influence more positive appraisal of situations that require the individual to attend to conflicting demands. One of the reasons for this is that individuals high on extraversion actually need to seek additional stimulation from their environment because they are cortically under aroused. Competing demands between roles would serve to provide the additional stimulation, but it would not be perceived as necessarily problematic. On the other hand, the introvert is cortically over aroused and any additional stimulation, such as inter-role conflict, would be uncomfortable and reported as such. However, the current results do not show any significant differences between the two groups on extraversion and inter-role conflict.

It is feasible that the positive affect, however low, in individuals low on extraversion, is in fact indistinguishable from the positive affect present in those who are high on the extraversion scale. Any amount of positive affect in the low extraversion group may be sufficient to produce positive and optimistic appraisals which could be similar to those that are reported by individuals high on extraversion. Therefore, differences between the two groups are not distinguishable on inter-role conflict. According to Costa and McCrae's (1991) definition of the introvert, this person is not unfriendly, just reserved. They are not followers but independent people, they do not suffer from social anxiety, pessimism or unhappiness. Given these characteristics, there is little in this definition to suggest that the low scorers on extraversion would differ from the high scorers on extraversion,

in terms of inter-role conflict. Perhaps this is why there was no significant difference between the two groups.

Hypothesis 2: Extraversion will be positively correlated with problem-focused coping and negatively correlated with emotion-focused coping and with 'less effective' coping.

Hypothesis 2 is not confirmed. There were no significant correlations between extraversion and coping strategies (Table 6.3). It would seem that the underlying positive affect and the sociability factor of extraversion do not show a relationship to either problem-focused, emotion-focused or 'less effective' coping strategies. Whether or not appraisals are seen as challenges and the individual feels more or less able to deal with situations cannot be determined from these results. Certainly, the literature suggests that the higher the extraversion scores the greater the use of specific adaptive and effective coping strategies (Bolger and Schilling 1991). However, this was not the case in this study.

It is possible that an individual's level of cortical arousal does not influence their choice in coping strategies. Whereas those with higher scores on extraversion would be expected to seek greater stimulation, usually from other people and activities, this is not the case here. The previous two studies identified the limited amount of social support available to many participants who combined multiple roles. Many reported that they had to meet several different demands single handedly and that there was little or no time available for themselves. These earlier findings may help to explain why there was no significant correlation between extraversion and coping. It is possible that in combining multiple roles, regardless of an individual's scores on the extraversion scale, perceptions of difficulties and stressful events are not reflected in coping strategies. When individuals have access to only some types of coping strategies and not others, personality influences such as optimism, and arousal levels are less evident.

Hypothesis 3a: Neuroticism will be negatively correlated with problem-focused coping and positively correlated with emotion-focused coping and with 'less effective' coping.

The results from testing hypothesis 3a confirmed that neuroticism was negatively correlated with problem-focused and positively correlated with 'less effective' coping (Table 6.4). However, results do not confirm that neuroticism was positively correlated with emotion-focused coping. Instead neuroticism was negatively correlated with emotion-focused coping.

The results suggest that the higher the scores for neuroticism the lower the scores for problem-focused coping and this is in accordance with the literature reviewed (Wearing and Hart 1996). When appraisals of situations are threatening, and the reaction to stressful situations is powerful and negative, coping strategies become less directive and task-oriented. It is possible that the high negative correlation between neuroticism and problem-focused coping means that stressful situations are perceived as unchangeable. Houtman and Bakker (1991) found that appraisal of changeable situations elicited problem-focused responses but, in this study, it seems that the greater the appraisal of threat, the less the individual attempted to tackle the nature of the problem. In fact, it seems that the greater the negative appraisal, the higher the use of 'less effective' coping. With greater emotional reaction and increased distress, the more the individual attempted to disengage from the stressor, possibly because during high levels of distress the individual's perceptual field is limited to the most obvious coping strategies (Vroom 1966).

The results showing a negative relationship between neuroticism and emotion-focused coping are anomalous with the bulk of the literature. Normally in situations that are perceived as less changeable, or appraised as being more threatening, greater emotion-focused coping is reported (Wearing and Hart 1996). The findings from this study suggest an alternative explanation. This posits that the greater the neuroticism score, the less often the individual uses emotion-focused coping because the very nature of neuroticism means that the individual is unable to use these particular coping strategies. The higher the score on neuroticism the higher the distress and the stronger the

emotional reaction. As a result of this, there is more interference with proper adjustment and it takes longer for the individuals to return to an even keel (Eysenck and Eysenck 1991). Emotion-focused coping is typically functional for controlling and reducing negative emotions, but, it seems that those individuals who score highly on the neuroticism scale, find it problematic to return to an 'even keel' and subsequently may find it difficult to engage with adjusting their coping strategies.

Hypothesis 3b: Those with low neuroticism scores will use more problem-focused coping, fewer emotion-focused coping and fewer 'less effective' coping strategies compared with those with high neuroticism scores.

Figure 6.2 presents the results for the analysis which relates to the above hypothesis. This figure shows a difference in the types of coping strategies used according to high and low neuroticism groups. Results confirm that the low neuroticism group make greater use of problem-focused coping, and fewer 'less effective' coping strategies compared to the high neuroticism group. However, on emotion-focused coping, although there is a significant difference between the two groups, it is those who score low on the neuroticism scale, who are using more of this coping strategy than the high neuroticism group. This is an unexpected result in terms of the existing literature. A priori analysis confirms that differences in coping strategies for the two groups are significant. Another unexpected result shows that the high neuroticism group are actually using as many 'less effective' coping strategies as problem-focused ones, which means that emotion-focused coping was used the least. The results that do support the existing research literature, are those that show the low neuroticism group to be using greater problem-focused and fewer 'less effective' coping strategies than the high neuroticism group (Carver et al 1989; Deary et al 1996; O'Brien and DeLongis 1996). There are varying explanations for these results. Individuals who score low on the neuroticism scale react to problems in a calm, even tempered manner, and according to McCrae and Costa (1989b), they are able to face stressful situations without becoming upset. If their reaction is calm, they are more able to think constructively and act rationally in order to reduce the problem. By engaging in problem-focused coping the individual indicates that situations can be changed (Carver et al 1989) and that there is some scope for control. Furthermore, by engaging

in problem-focused coping, the individual is having to focus on the problem and this may consequently increase levels of distress. The implication of this is that the low neuroticism group would not find this problematic, but the high neuroticism group would. If individuals low on neuroticism are capable of taking direct action to resolve difficulties, without experiencing additional stress, then there is lesser need to engage in 'less effective' coping. Many of those coping strategies serve to disengage the individual from the problem in one way or another and, by so doing, the problem becomes less salient.

Further analysis of problem-focused coping show that the low neuroticism group were using more active and planning coping strategies, compared to the high neuroticism group. Further analysis of 'less effective' coping show that the high neuroticism group are using more mental disengagement. Active coping refers to direct action and tackling the source of the problem. Planning refers to thinking about the action strategies and the best way to handle the problem. Mental disengagement refers to reduced efforts and, in some cases, giving up the attempt to handle the stressor.

The results for emotion-focused coping show that it is the low neuroticism group who are reporting a greater usage compared to the high neuroticism group. It is suggested that individuals high on neuroticism experience greater distress from stressful situations because they react in a powerful and negative way. This is in part due to their unstable autonomic nervous systems and partly due to the appraisals they make of situations that are threatening. Their coping strategies do not include confronting the stressor by taking active measures and by planning ahead. Instead they show a preference for disengaging from the problem which only serves to maintain it. Consequently, the distress cannot be reduced because emotion-focused coping is the least preferred coping strategy. Therefore, it would appear that a circular pattern exists. The individual high on neuroticism reacts strongly and negatively to stressful situations, but because they do not show a preference for emotion-focused coping, the experience of negative emotions is prolonged and interferes with effective coping. Consequently, by not using emotion-focused coping to any great extent, these individuals are allowing strong negative emotions to take

precedence. This notion is clearly supported by results in the current study which show that the high neuroticism group use significantly fewer 'positive reinterpretation and growth' coping strategies within emotion-focused coping. This specific coping strategy is concerned with positive appraisals and the management of negative emotions, and might function to reduce distressing emotions.

It would seem that there are distinct and significant differences in the types of coping strategies used by the high and low neuroticism groups. The pattern of results suggest that those individuals who are high on neuroticism, maintain their high levels of distress through the coping strategies they use. They show a preference for both distracting themselves from the problem, and refusing to think about it, or plan how they might resolve it whilst also increasing their efforts to tackle the problem directly. Their high level of distress is also maintained by the infrequent use of emotion-focused coping. In particular, given that they are experiencing a high level of emotional distress, they cannot view the problem in a positive light which might serve to make it more manageable. Indeed, the very nature of neuroticism means that these individuals overreact to unpleasant stimuli and that they cannot adjust as quickly as more stable individuals in proportion to unpleasant stimuli.

6.6.1 Issues of contention

This study has considered the influence of personality upon the experience of combining multiple roles and preferred coping strategies. Although it has provided some useful insights, it is worth noting four specific factors in drawing conclusions. Firstly, participants were given a series of questionnaires, which they took away to complete in their own time. Some participants completed these amongst other students during lecture breaks and others completed theirs at home. The environment in which participants completed their questionnaires was not controlled by the researcher, and was consequently not constant. It is possible that external factors such as the company of peers, the presence of family members, external noise, and other distractions may have had an effect on responses. These factors may have prevented students from accurately considering each questionnaire item, although the usual advice in completing self reports

is not to spend too much time considering any individual item as this can interfere with accurate responses. Nonetheless, it is not possible to determine the extent of environmental influences upon participants' responses.

Secondly, following on from this point, those students who completed questionnaires amongst peers and family members, may have been subjected to social desirability effects. In other words, they may have been influenced to report fewer conflicts between specific roles, such as the parent and self or the spouse and work, especially if spouses and children were present. Likewise participants may have felt inclined to report lower levels of distress and fewer undesirable coping strategies, such as turning to alcohol or drugs. Several of the participants returned their questionnaires in person, either to collect their participation point, or to gain further information about the research. Therefore it is possible that these participants felt exposed purely because they were identifiable, and consequently might have reported more positive characteristics and avoided what they perceived as negative ones. This might have led to a propensity for results to be somewhat biased towards the positive perceptions but this will be the case for all participants and should not unduly corrupt comparative measures.

Thirdly, the COPE questionnaire aims to measure typical ways of coping, by asking individuals to rate themselves on particular questions. For example, how often 'I laugh about a situation'. In answering these questions, participants may be recalling the last stressful incident they remember and reporting how they coped in that specific situation. In selecting isolated stressful incidents, participants may not be reporting those coping strategies which are habitually used. Therefore, individual differences in coping may be situationally based rather than personality based. However, it is arguable that situational stressors are in fact personality based (Bolger 1990). Carver, Scheier and Weintraub (1989) considered this issue and resolved it by including only those questionnaire items which could be answered from both personality and situational orientations. As a result the COPE can be used to examine both disposition and situation-based coping. Despite this, it is beyond the scope of the current study to identify the

precise extent to which participants choose personality based coping, or situational based coping in responding to the questionnaires.

Fourth, there was a clear difference between the high and low neuroticism group on inter-role conflict, whereby the high neuroticism group reported greater inter-role conflict. These results can be interpreted in one of two ways. Either the high neuroticism group experienced more inter-role conflict, and reported it accurately, or this particular group did not experience more inter-role conflict but perceived the conflict which they experienced as more salient (i.e. the effect was due to reporting). Certainly, the research literature suggest that individuals high in negative affectivity, namely the high neuroticism group do recall more unpleasant information. Smith and Williams (1992) and Watson and Clark (1992) have argued that greater recall of distressing events, by individuals high in negative affectivity was not associated with objective measures. In other words, the high neuroticism group may have perceived greater conflict rather than actually experiencing it. Nonetheless, there is also evidence to suggest that individuals high on neuroticism do actually experience greater strains such as inter-role conflict. For example, Ormel and Wohlfarth (1991) reported that these individuals are more likely to create or be involved in social environments in which particular types of strain occur frequently. Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the difference in the reported inter-role conflict is the result of actual experiences of inter-role conflict or merely due to a greater propensity to report it. Certainly there is evidence to suggest that either or both of these possibilities might be valid.

6.6.2 Conclusion

Study three provided an investigation of two personality factors of neuroticism and extraversion in relation to inter-role conflict and coping strategies. These results provide evidence to suggest that individuals who score high on neuroticism experience greater inter-role conflict, use more problem-focused, fewer emotion-focused, and more 'less effective' coping strategies when compared with the low neuroticism group.

On closer inspection, individuals high on neuroticism used more behavioural disengagement which would signify that, on the occurrence of a problem, efforts to deal with the stressor were reduced and, in some cases, these individuals would have abandoned all attempts at attaining their goal. This coping strategy is characteristic of 'learned helplessness' which involves a hopeless and helpless attitude to a problem. Moreover, when a difficulty occurs, the individual high on neuroticism reacts strongly and negatively and this reaction may then determine a rigid and irrational approach. As a consequence, this can prevent the person from taking active steps to remove the stressor. There is evidence of this pattern from the results of this study which shows the high neuroticism group to be using significantly fewer 'active' coping strategies in their problem-focused coping. Similarly, because their reactions tend to be extreme they are unable to adjust quickly (Eysenck and Eysenck 1991) and subsequently cannot think about taking constructive steps to handle the problem. Again this is evident from the results which show the high neuroticism group to be using significantly fewer 'planning' coping strategies when compared to the low neuroticism group. The extreme negative emotional reaction would normally be controlled and reduced by individuals interactively regulating these emotions by employing emotion-focused coping. However, individuals high on neuroticism tended to show the least preference for emotion-focused coping strategies and a greater preference for both problem focused and 'less effective' coping.

Results in this study show that there is no significant relationship between extraversion and inter-role conflict, or between extraversion and coping strategies. The literature suggests that extraversion is positively related to effective coping strategies (Gallagher 1996), such as problem-focused coping, and a potential explanation for this has been given earlier in this discussion. It also suggests that extraverted individuals tend to experience very low levels of distress, both as a cause and effect of their coping (Bolger 1990). In the context of women combining multiple roles, extraversion did not show any effect in terms of the typical coping strategies that were used, or in the reported level of inter-role conflict. In other words, this study demonstrates no relationship between the underlying positive affect in extraversion in the experience of combining multiple roles, or the choice of preferred coping strategies.

CHAPTER SEVEN

STUDY FOUR: CASE STUDIES

7.1 Introduction

Four case studies are presented in this chapter, one from each of the design cells used in the research design for study two. This study investigated the relationship between life satisfaction and the roles of paid worker and student. The design cells are therefore 'worker' versus 'student' and 'high' versus 'low' life satisfaction. Consequently, in the case studies which follow, Barbara is an example of a 'worker' reporting low levels of life satisfaction whereas Diane is a 'worker' reporting high levels of life satisfaction. Emma is an example of a student reporting low levels of life satisfaction, whereas Sheila is a 'student' reporting high levels of life satisfaction. These particular participants were selected as case studies because their interview responses were typical of the responses received from the other participants in their design cell, rather than because they represent extreme cases. The case study method has been employed so that the rich qualitative data made available at interview during study two can be used to illustrate some of the tensions these women experience when combining their particular multiple roles as well as the potential impact this has on reported levels of life satisfaction. Each case is considered in relation to some of the more salient findings and issues to emerge from the quantitative studies presented in this thesis.

A total of 80 participants were contacted to arrange for interviews to be conducted. As a result of follow up letters and telephone contact, 43 of these agreed to give interviews. Out of these, 27 could be classified as 'workers' and 16 as 'students'. Clearly, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to present all of these participants as case studies so 'typical' examples have been used, as described above. The remainder of the interviews have been set aside for future analysis. Each case study will be presented in turn, and this will involve relating qualitative accounts to each participants questionnaire scores and to general key findings in the quantitative analysis. Following the case studies a comparison between cases will be presented and related to general trends in the quantitative analysis.

7.2 Barbara: A case study of low life satisfaction in paid work

7.2.1 Background

This case study is presented because it provides a typical example of a woman working full time and reporting low life satisfaction. Data gathered from interview with Barbara is used to illustrate some of the major findings presented in the quantitative research. This data will be considered under the main subheadings used in the quantitative analysis.

Barbara is married with two children aged eight months and two and a half years of age. She works full time as a grocery manager for approximately thirty nine hours a week. Barbara feels dissatisfied with her 'life style' (5/24), her 'personal life' (14/30) and her 'standards and achievements' (7/30), as measured by the life satisfaction questionnaire. She also feels dissatisfied with her employment and considers this to be merely a 'job' rather than a career. She returned to work straight after maternity leave, purely as a financial imperative.

7.2.2 Role demands and life satisfaction

The results from study two showed that up to three role demands were associated with high life satisfaction and more than three role demands were associated with low life satisfaction. In Barbara's case, six role demands were reported. These included two elderly dependent in-laws, two children under the age of twelve, her return to paid work because of financial necessity, and the fact that she reported her husband as also being dependent. She explains this latter assertion as follows:

"I consider him (husband) as being a dependent, a burden. He is here to drain me of everything, my money, my happiness and my energy. He's never there for me or the children. Instead he has so many demands of his own, he's worse than a child."

In outlining her experiences of combining multiple roles, Barbara describes a sense of isolation, constant tiredness and unhappiness. She works purely out of financial necessity, and when at work she is often distracted by thoughts of her children. Her

husband refuses to assist with either the children or the household chores. Barbara's feelings of dissatisfaction from so many role demands are clearly evident in some of her comments during interview:

"Work in itself takes it out of me, it's a long day. I get home and take over from my mother-in-law straight away...I feed the children, play with them, bath them and put them to bed. Then I get the sandwiches ready for tomorrow... and on top of that there is the housework, ironing and cooking for when my husband gets in."

Although it would seem that Barbara chooses to engage in so many tasks, her account suggests a very different picture. Her husband is employed as a bus driver and often does shift work involving "late hours and early morning starts". He expects his wife to fulfil her role in caring for him, her in-laws and their children. If Barbara resists this pressure or if she asks for assistance from her husband, she reports that "we argue". Although this is common amongst many couples, in this case the implications might be more serious:

"If I say anything we argue and he's been known to get aggressive so I've given up trying."

Barbara is very much alone in managing all of her tasks and although she receives some help from her elderly mother in-law, this only seems to add to her sense of dissatisfaction and guilt. The worry about her children and her mother in-law is founded in Barbara's own view that sometimes her mother in-law cannot manage:

"She is fairly old and weak and often ill, she will say it's too much for her and I can see that it is."

Barbara feels that she should be looking after her mother-in-law rather than leaving her to care for two small children. Although Barbara's father-in-law is perfectly able and physically stronger, she reports that "he's not much help at all" because:

".....any difficulty with the children and, he'll pass them on to my mother in-law, no matter what she's doing."

Barbara's high level of dissatisfaction is reflected in most of the items on the life satisfaction questionnaire. For example, she returned the lowest scores possible for the house she lives in, her standard of living, the way she spends her leisure time, and for both her social and family life. In many ways this is not surprising, given that her daily routine consists of completing, with little or no support, the demands of several different roles. She has no help from friends and has not made any friends since she married. No additional support from family is available because Barbara is geographically distant from most of her relatives.

In summary, Barbara's circumstances are such that there are too many role demands, little or no social support, and an obvious dissatisfaction with most aspects of her life.

7.2.3 Inter-role conflict and life satisfaction

Individual items in the Inter-role conflict scale show high levels of conflict between specific types of roles. The highest conflict occurred between work vs. self and work vs. parent (17/20). This score indicates the range from 4, representing the least amount of satisfaction to 20 representing the highest amount of satisfaction for life. The lowest level of conflict was reported between the spouse vs. parent roles (3/15). Data from interview with Barbara helps to illustrate the nature of this conflict.

7.2.3.1 work vs. self

Barbara reports experiencing the maximum conflict on the questionnaire item 'wanting to be recognised at a high level in terms of work and wanting to maximise personal development'. It is possible that Barbara's conception of her work as being just a job and not a career, reflects the division between this role and her 'self' role. Perhaps if Barbara's employment was perceived more positively as a career, she would experience less conflict between the work and self roles. If this were the case she might be engaged in achieving something for herself through her employment. The extent of the conflict between the role of work and the role of self is further illustrated by Barbara's reference to what she would rather be doing if she didn't have to work:

"I wouldn't mind the job so much if it was part-time, then I could develop my interests in catering. There is a course three days a week, only for a year, at the college. I would love to do that and I'd be good at it."

Despite this aim, she clearly feels that it will be a very long time before she can afford to work part-time. There is an element of frustration and dissatisfaction with what Barbara believes she is capable of in terms of her work role compared to what she is actually doing. She obtained A-levels at school and is satisfied with this (as indicated by the 4 out of a maximum of 6 on the life satisfaction scale). She also indicates that the training for her job was very satisfactory (5 out of 6). Despite this, she rates the lowest satisfaction for what she has accomplished in life (1 out of 6). A contributory factor to this low rating is that she feels undermined at work, partly because she returned after maternity leave. This is something which she recognises she may have in common with many other women:

"People have this idea that women with babies are not fit to handle a managerial position, that they are likely to leave soon, so it doesn't matter how you treat them."

Barbara would welcome further training, perhaps through staff development courses, and she also considers that she would benefit from more opportunities to work on her own initiative. However, she often feels excluded from some aspects of the work role because overtime hours and courses are offered to other people, but are not made available to her. She considers that this is because of an assumption that:

"I couldn't or wouldn't be away from the baby or that I had to be at home for a specific time."

Barbara reports that this is not the case and that she would have welcomed the opportunity to develop her skills further.

7.2.3.2 Work vs. parent

Barbara provides some illustration of the conflict she experiences between the work and the parental roles. The questionnaire item measuring the conflict between 'your child

requesting that you stay at home with him or her versus you following the routine of your work schedule', suggests maximum inter-role conflict:

"I hate leaving the children, I think about them all day at work and I wish I was with them, but somebody's got to pay the bills."

In particular, the conflict between work and parent roles centres around the guilt experienced as a result of leaving her eight month old child, with her elderly mother in-law. Barbara perceives this sacrifice as even more futile when it is for a "dead end job that isn't going anywhere."

7.2.3.3 Spouse vs. parent

Surprisingly, questionnaire items such as 'hiring a child care person so that you and your spouse can have uninterrupted time together versus being with your child', were reported as causing no internal conflict. Additionally, all items measuring conflict between the spouse and parental roles were reported as causing no conflict. These ratings can be better understood by considering the wider context of Barbara's relationship with her husband. The main reason for Barbara's return to a full time job she dislikes was to provide additional financial support for her family. Although her husband also works full time, his wages were not sufficient to meet the family's requirements after he had spent much of his income on alcohol:

"To be honest he drinks his wages. He'll come home and no matter whether it's the afternoon or evening he'll go down the pub and drink usually all weekend. Before he started this job he was drinking from 12 noon until 12 at night coming home with a bag of chips and off to bed."

This particular information reflects the extent to which Barbara and her husband have separate lives. Whilst her husband has reduced the amount of time he spends drinking, largely due to employment constraints, he still spends most of his leisure time away from the family. When Barbara was asked why she reported 'no conflict' between her spousal and parental roles, she replied:

"I'm never torn between my children and my husband...I don't want to spend any time with him, I certainly wouldn't put him before the children, why should I?"

Therefore, the reasoning behind the apparent lack of conflict between these two roles is evident given the nature of the spousal relationship.

7.2.3.4 Spouse vs. self

Barbara does report experiencing conflict between her spousal and self roles, both in the questionnaire (13/20) and in the interview. Barbara reported that she and her husband had very different ideas of what their respective roles should be. According to her husband, a wife's duties included sole responsibility for the house, children, and the care of dependent relatives. In addition, it included tending to the needs of her husband. Barbara reports:

"There is a lot of conflicting ideas and interests between my husband and me, in every way. He wants one thing and I want another. He wants a slave and I want a husband. He refuses to stay indoors looking after his children because he believes it's a woman's job. As for the housework, he really thinks that is beneath him."

7.2.3.5 Work vs. spouse

There is also evidence of conflict between work and spousal roles. Given that the cost of neglecting either is high, Barbara aims to meet both role demands at great cost in terms of her own time and energy. During the interview, this conflict was often evidenced:

"Sometimes I've got paper work to complete for work, and after putting the children to bed and all that. I have to wash, iron, cook and clean after my husband. Sometimes I don't even begin the paperwork until well after midnight."

Although the conflict between the work vs. spousal roles rated 12/20 on the inter-role conflict scale. This was clearly not indicative of wanting to spend more time at work. The conflict marks the struggle to complete several demands in the same day and often simultaneously. She does not want to spend any more time with her 'dependent' husband than she does at her place of employment. She recalls that, when she returned to work, "things weren't exactly peaceful at home" and that compared to her home life, she felt that even a "dead-end job" would be better. She acknowledges that at work she is able to have some "fun". Furthermore, she has people working for her and she considers this to be a bonus. Barbara begins her day before 6.30 am to travel for an hour and a half in order to

arrive at work by 8.00 am. Despite these early starts and the long journeys, she reports preferring this to her home life.

Given what Barbara has said about her home life, her relationship with her husband and her employment, it seems most likely that she is engaging in these roles because she perceives she has no alternative.

7.2.4 Coping and life satisfaction

When Barbara was asked about her coping strategies in relation to her multiple demands, her immediate response was to suggest that she did not cope at all. However, on further reflection she acknowledged that one way she was able to meet so many role demands on her own, was by having no social life of her own, and little or no time to relax:

"I don't think I do cope to be honest. I can't remember the last time I had time for myself, there is always so much to do and people demanding this or that."

She also reports that when she loses her temper with her children, it is usually because she perceives them as too demanding and because she is tired. This makes her feel very guilty:

"I hate myself afterwards, it's not their fault, but I can't help it sometimes, I just shout at them, then we're all upset."

Barbara reports feeling distressed and worried much of the time. Whenever anything goes wrong "I think, not another thing". Sometimes she says "I ask God why I'm in such an awful situation", but even that leads to feelings of guilt, when she recalls that she has two healthy children and that she could be in a worse situation.

Barbara's coping questionnaire responses suggest that she uses emotion-focused coping most frequently, followed by 'less effective' coping. Problem-focused coping is used the least. When questioned about these coping strategies the replies suggest a very high level of coping through acceptance:

"Yes, I suppose I do accept everything, there is always more to come, but if I could I would change it all."

'Acceptance' is the mental interpretation that a stressor is real. Barbara feels that she has little or no control over other people's behaviour and, as a result, she reports using acceptance coping to it's maximum (16/16 - which is the maximum score for each coping category). Her relationship with her husband, her employment and her financial position contribute to her feelings of having no control over her life. This is reflected in her very low score on problem-focused coping (34/80) and, in particular, her low score on 'active' coping (5/16) which can be described as dealing directly with a stressor. She also returned low scores for 'suppression of competing activities' (5/16), which is the avoidance of becoming distracted as a way of concentrating efforts to deal with the stressor. In other words, she seems to have given up attempting active coping measures and resorted to a more passive emotion focused approach. There is an irony in that on the one hand, she seems to behaviourally accept her situation, but that on the other hand, this can lead to internal conflict between what she aspires to and what she perceives she has:

"I worry about everything and I think about how things could have been and how they are."

Barbara's second most preferred coping strategy is 'less effective' coping. She scores particularly high on 'behavioural disengagement' (14/16) and this is reflected in her account of how she has given up attempts to get what she wants and seems to have decided to accept her circumstances as they are. In other words, there is a marked mismatch between what she thinks and what she does.

7.2.5 Conclusion

Barbara has come to accept her life style as beyond her influence and control. Her attitude is one that typifies learned helplessness, which is the belief that occurring events are not within the individuals control and that any attempts at influencing these events are of no avail. Barbara has six role demands and experiences a high degree of conflict between some of these roles. She is involved in an abusive, unsupportive relationship, and has

more or less sole responsibility for her two young children as well as two dependent relatives. Indeed, her relationship with her spouse is so poor that, paradoxically, she reports experiencing no conflict between her spousal and parental roles. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that Barbara feels helpless and is unable to find the energy to be optimistic or to take active coping measures such as looking for support from others. Clearly, her life style does not allow her time to find additional support nor does it allow her sufficient free time to develop interests of her own. Her stark account of her situation suggests that she is balancing her roles at great cost to herself emotionally, cognitively and behaviourally. Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that her life satisfaction score is so low and that her coping strategies are largely emotion-focused or 'less effective'. It is only in those situations which are perceived as changeable, that individuals can attempt to use active problem-focused coping. Poignantly, Barbara indicates extreme dissatisfaction for what the future holds for her and demonstrates the extent to which she now habitually uses 'acceptance' coping strategies:

"I can't imagine things ever getting better, worse, yes."

7.3 Diane: A case study of high life satisfaction in paid work

7.3.1 Background

This case study is presented because it provides a typical example of a woman working full time and reporting high life satisfaction. Data gathered from interview with Diane is used to illustrate some of the major findings presented in the quantitative research. This data will be considered under the main subheadings used in the quantitative analysis.

Diane is married with a one year old son and she works full time in management as a film editor for approximately forty five hours a week. She is currently in the most senior post possible for someone with her qualifications and experience. Her scores on the life satisfaction scale indicate high levels of satisfaction with 'life style' (18/24), 'personal life' (25/30) and 'standards and achievements' (19/30). She returned to work after maternity leave to continue to develop her career and because she could take advantage of both flexible hours and a high salary. Diane's husband also works in management and his employment involves working long hours.

7.3.2 Role demands and life satisfaction

The results from study two showed that up to three role demands were associated with high life satisfaction and more than three role demands were associated with low life satisfaction. In Diane's case, two role demands were reported. One of these was responsibility for her young son and her return to the work role. She returned to work largely because the family needed the extra money but recognises there were other reasons:

"Oh sure the salary's attractive, but that not the only reason, it's my career, it's what I do and what I'm good at..."

Diane reports that her young son is cared for by a full time nanny and, although that makes her life much easier, there are nevertheless some problems. Diane identifies that she makes many compromises because of what she sees as inadequacies in the nanny:

"Judith (nanny) is not domesticated and is not in tune with things like cooking very much."

According to Diane, the nanny also has problems getting up in the morning and she finds herself having to wake Judith most mornings. Despite this, she acknowledges that Judith "gets on with Lawrence (baby) which is the main thing."

Diane also emphasises that "you can get lucky with nannies or not". As her nanny was not very skilled at domestic chores, Diane found this a little stressful. She adds "I have to do the shopping and cooking which actually adds to the strain of trying to cope. As Diane's husband also works long hours, she is often having to manage many of the chores that the nanny cannot:

"I have to make sure that everything is running very smoothly for him (husband) all the time."

Although Diane has reported two role demands, she has full-time assistance from her nanny in caring for her son and this has only been affordable because of her well paid job. Although Diane reported having returned to work for a number of different reasons as well as 'the money', she clearly enjoys her job and her high salary is a useful benefit to her.

7.3.3 Inter-role conflict and life satisfaction

Individual items in the Inter-role conflict scale show levels of conflict between specific types of roles. The highest conflict reported by Diane was between work vs. self and between spouse vs. self (10/20). The second highest conflict was experienced between her work vs. parent roles and between her work vs. spouse role (9/20). The lowest level of conflict was reported between spouse vs. parent roles (6/15), followed by conflict between her parental and self roles (8/15).

7.3.3.1 Work vs. self

Diane reported experiencing moderate conflict between 'advancing your career goals vs developing meaningful relationships'. She explains that her work involves working and competing with men "who have it easier in many ways" and, in order to keep matters professional, she does not introduce any personal issues at work. Diane explains that she has had to work hard to get "to the top" and sometimes it's even harder to remain there. Although she enjoys working with her colleagues, she is wary of forming friendships which could interfere with her position:

"Sometimes it's nice to know a little more about people, but as soon as you mix socially things start to go wrong and people are quick to quibble and gossip, and I hate that, so I try to avoid becoming too friendly."

It was not possible to ascertain whether Diane was experiencing this because she was the only female in her position or whether it was a common difficulty for other employees.

Diane reported experiencing some conflict between 'doing what you know you need to do to advance in your work vs doing what you would prefer to do in your work'. She explained that there appeared to be many different rules which people used to work with others and through which things get done. Sometimes, she expressed a desire to cut through the politics and address the issues directly, but recognised that this is not the way the management of her organisation worked. Consequently, she often felt frustrated and held back. She suggested that people were quick to criticise and apportion blame if anything went wrong and that this could create a tense atmosphere at work:

"If you've done well because you've taken the initiative, then everyone's patting themselves on the back, but if things don't go your way, then everyone knew it was a mistake, and you end up looking like an idiot."

Later in the interview, Diane acknowledges that she might have painted a negative picture and that perhaps things are not quite that bad:

"....they can be if you don't know the ropes, but I've been there for long enough to know what's what."

7.3.3.2 Spouse vs. self

There is also some conflict between Diane's spousal and self roles. This is mainly because she has an elderly mother who has recently lost her husband and consequently Diane visits every six weeks. Her mother lives quite a distance from Diane and because she is lonely and elderly, Diane feels that she should spend a reasonable length of time with her. In order to do this, she has to leave her husband and child behind and this can put quite a lot of strain on her marital relationship:

"I find leaving Lawrence and Peter very difficult and it means that we see less of each other.... and that hasn't helped."

Diane wants to spend more time with her husband and child, rather than have the nanny look after the baby. At the same time she wants to continue to attend 'company' social functions with her husband:

"It's different now, it's not just him (husband) and me, we have to spend time together as a family, but it just seems such an effort for us all to be at home at the same time and without one of us having to work."

She does not think her husband understands that this is an issue because it is just as important for him to succeed in his career as it is for him to succeed as a husband and a father. Consequently, he considers that the three roles are interdependent. However, although Diane feels the same way, she feels that she does more than meet the demands of her spousal, parental and worker roles. She also attends to:

"all the bits in the middle that he (husband) wouldn't have even thought about."

The "bits in the middle" include ensuring there is adequate cover for when the nanny cannot work, doing the shopping immediately after work because lunch times are taken up with breast feeding, and doing all the cooking for her family. Diane also has domestic help once a week to keep the house clean and tidy and she considers this an asset because it is one less time consuming task for her to do. She reported that her husband does not help with the domestic chores:

"He never does much around the house, well he's hardly ever there, and week ends when I get stuck into the ironing, he says 'Oh come on, leave that, I thought we were going to do something together', but how can I just leave it, it's got to be done."

7.3.3.3 work vs. parent

Before she had the baby, Diane's life was not so complicated and although she expected several changes, she was surprised at the extent to which the new baby did change things. She did not find her return to work easy and there were two main reasons for this. Firstly, she found it problematic coping with the "speed of things" after a period of time away and found the changes in technology, in particular, difficult to cope with. Despite this, it did not take her long to realise that "it hadn't changed so much that I couldn't cope with it".

Secondly, although Diane had only taken leave for eight weeks, she found it difficult to adjust to her work environment again. This was partly because she had been concerned about her first pregnancy and whilst the work was always there, it had to take "second place" until the baby was born. Whilst Diane experiences some difficulties between her work and parental roles she is anxious not to give the impression that she is "struggling to leave the house before 8.00am" or that she finds it hard to combine motherhood with a managerial position:

"I went into work with my clothes properly ironed and I didn't look like a stressful mother - I went into work dressed very smartly and I didn't put up any baby pictures or anything. The only time I talked about Lawrence was with other mothers, but kept it as professional as possible."

One of the reasons Diane advances to explain why she finds it difficult to be anything other than professional, and why she feels that she cannot discuss her new maternal role with her colleagues, is because she works in a male dominated environment where the attitude towards her is different:

"I find with men, I feel as if I'm in a second job, in their eyes my job is like a hobby irrespective of my professional capabilities, therefore I feel I can't afford to make any mistakes - I have to be on top of things so I can't be criticised."

Given this context, it is not surprising that she feels that there is no room to be anything other than business-like all the time. This situation is exacerbated because Diane is breast feeding her son and has to be discrete about this:

"I was able to come home for over an hour at lunch time to breast feed the baby, so that wasn't too stressful. The management didn't mind me having an extra fifteen minutes...nobody really worries about lunch time - they're okay about that."

She also experiences some guilt for leaving the baby to go to work, particularly when the child cries for her to stay with him. This was identified as causing 'moderate conflict' in the questionnaire item 'your child requesting that you stay at home with him or her versus your following the routine of your usual work schedule'. Equally, Diane reports feelings of guilt for resuming her career when she could be "bringing up" her child. However, she recognises that her job allows the family to have many privileges that they would otherwise lose if they had to rely solely on her husband's income. She also acknowledges that she has a very good childminder and that this had helped to settle the "occasional feelings of guilt", she experiences

7.3.3.4 Work vs. spouse

Diane reported experiencing some conflict between her spousal and work role. Her husband has recently been made partner in one of the fastest growing firms of solicitors in their area and spends much of his time promoting the firm. This can entail long hours socialising and entertaining with other partners and clients. Diane had also received several invitations to attend social functions for her own company and that sometimes life seems like "one big cheese and wine gathering". Conflict occurs because her husband expects her to accompany him to many of these social functions because his colleagues' partners and client's partners also attend. However, Diane considers that this is her free time and she should be able to relax and spend time with their new child. She admits that since the child was born she hasn't felt the pressure to attend these functions, but sometimes she felt guilty for not attending and providing support for her husband. Diane considers that the conflict she experiences between her spousal and self roles may be due largely to changes taking place at the moment and may not be long term issues:

"We're both at the top of our careers and sometimes we have to make sacrifices for the other one's sake.....at the moment I'm also busy with Lawrence as well as trying to do a good job at work. Peter (husband) is trying to promote the company, and that's time consuming, but it won't always be like that."

7.3.3.5 Parent vs. self

Some conflict was reported between the parental and self roles in response to questionnaire items like, 'wanting to be alone vs your child wanting to be with you' and between 'giving priority to your family versus giving priority to yourself'. Diane outlined her life before the pregnancy to illustrate the extent of the changes she has had to make in order to accommodate her baby:

"We were always on the go, work, friends, meetings, functions, the gym, meals and trips out....., just the two of us or a small group of us.....I started to look after myself, eating properly, no alcohol, no parties, fewer functions..... I reserved all my energy for work because I didn't want to appear slack, I also worked right up until the end."

Diane admits that she finds the drastic change in her life style a "bit strange sometimes" but recognises that she now has other priorities and responsibilities. She also pointed out that, when her son is older, there is no reason why she could not resume some of her other interests. Diane does admit that she feels frustrated at the little time left available for herself after a full day at work and time with her son:

"If I'm under pressure to get something out in time and I come home and my husband is working late, I have to slot everything in while looking after Lawrence and that is very tiring. I'm totally exhausted by 8.00pm after I've bathed him and put him to bed. Then I feel frustrated because I haven't got any time to myself."

It would seem that, although Diane has the necessary assistance from her nanny and her weekly domestic help, she needs this in order to maintain both her work and parental roles. Her job is obviously demanding and she feels the pressure to function as she did before the birth of her baby, but, with her baby still breast feeding, she is having to fit her parental role around her work role. Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that Diane doesn't report more conflict between these roles than she does.

7.3.3.6 Spouse vs. parent

The lowest conflict Diane reported was between her spousal and parental roles. She stated:

"there's not really much conflict between wanting to be with Lawrence or Peter, they're both equally important to me."

She explained that whilst she does spend enough time with both her husband and son, that this was often individually rather than as a family unit. In her inter-role conflict questionnaire she reported experiencing some conflict between 'hiring a child care person so that you and your spouse can have uninterrupted time together vs being with your child'. This conflict was the result of feeling guilty for leaving Lawrence with the nanny for a few hours whilst Diane and her husband went for a meal on her birthday:

" It's silly I know, but I kept thinking I should be at home with my son, yet I was enjoying having the time with Peter, after all it's not very often we get to do that."

Although Diane feels that she has enough time with both her son and husband, albeit individually, she is concerned that her husband and son don't have enough time together:

"Peter spends all day and some evenings working, most nights. Lawrence is fast asleep by the time Peter gets in. We joke that Lawrence isn't going to recognise his dad, but Peter is concerned about this too."

Diane's concern over this issue was expressed in her reporting 'slight' conflict between 'taking responsibility for the needs of your child vs wanting your spouse to take more responsibility in this area'. Nonetheless, Diane remains optimistic that Peter will have more time to spend with his son in the near future.

7.3.4 Coping and life satisfaction

Initially, Diane reported little about her specific coping strategies, except to say that she felt that she coped very well. Certainly, according to her coping inventory, Diane was coping well. She reported using problem-focused coping more than any other coping strategy (58/80). This was followed by emotion-focused coping (53/80) with 'less effective' coping being used the least (31/80).

Within the problem-focused coping category, Diane rated the maximum marks for 'active' coping (16/16), which is taking direct action to resolve a stressor, and high scores for 'planning' (14/16). In her interview, Diane mentioned the importance of planning in order to maintain stress levels to a minimum. She reported taking time out to get her clothing and work ready for the next day in order that by the time she got to work, she was calm.

Within the emotion-focused coping category, Diane reported using 'positive interpretation and growth' to its maximum, followed by 'acceptance' coping (15/16). Not only did she accept her stressors as being real, she also viewed them optimistically and sought to learn something positive from her negative experiences. Her positive and optimistic outlook was also evident in interview when she remarked that "things would get better". She made regular comparisons with people less fortunate than herself, who really did have to manage with everything alone. Diane reported that she receives emotional and practical assistance from her husband, friends, and from 'hired' help. She felt that being able to afford the assistance to care for Lawrence and with the domestic chores, enabled her to keep her "head above water". She felt that if there was a short cut which saved her time and energy (such as a dishwasher, potato peeler or tumble dryer), she took advantage of it and that this in itself, was an effective coping strategy. When Diane was asked about her high score on venting emotions, a 'less effective' coping strategy, she made her point succinctly:

"I express my feelings all the time, I may not shout and scream, like I want to, but I let my feelings be known to those that need to know."

Conclusion

This particular case study considers a woman who is at the height of her career and who has just assumed the additional role of 'parent'. This case study typifies many other situations where women are attempting to succeed in several different roles by drawing upon the resources available to them. Diane and her husband can afford a nanny and a weekly housekeeper to assist them and this is clearly helpful given that they are both engaged in demanding jobs. Despite this, Diane still finds herself short of personal time

after a full day at work and spending time with her baby. She describes the nanny as "very good with the baby" and this clearly helps ease the guilt and pressure Diane feels about leaving her child to go to work. Nonetheless, the conflict she experiences between maintaining her high reputation at work and attending to her role as mother is evident. Diane's husband also has a demanding job which involves working long hours, and this has added to her workload. This is reflected in some of the conflict she feels between her work role and spousal role and her spousal role and self role. However, Diane acknowledges that these demands will become less frequent as both her husband and herself adapt to their new roles. Furthermore, her coping strategies suggest that she maintains stress to a minimum by tackling the source of the stress when it occurs. Her good organisational skills and use of 'planning' coping strategies ensure that she is able to manage her stress levels by keeping unnecessary sources of concern at bay. This is reflected in her positive view of her own coping abilities:

"I think I cope pretty well."

7.4 Emma: A case study of low life satisfaction in education

7.4.1 Background

This case study is presented because it provides a typical example of a woman returning to full time education and reporting low life satisfaction. Data gathered from interview with Emma is used to illustrate some of the major findings presented in the quantitative research. This data will be considered under the main subheadings used in the quantitative analysis.

Emma is married with three children aged five, seven and nine years of age. Her husband is employed full time as a labourer. Emma is currently in her second year of a psychology degree. She also works part time as a librarian, for approximately fifteen hours a week, to help support herself through the degree course. Emma's responses on the life satisfaction questionnaire indicate low scores for 'life style' (6/24), 'personal life' (7/30) and 'standards and achievements' (5/30). Before returning to education Emma worked full time as a librarian. She considered this employment to be more a 'job' than a career, but acknowledged that it was a job she was very satisfied with. She returned to education when her youngest child started full time at infant school. Her reasons for returning to education were to gain higher qualifications, to pursue an academic interest, and to secure a career.

7.4.2 Role demands and life satisfaction

The results from study two showed that up to three role demands were associated with high life satisfaction and more than three role demands were associated with low life satisfaction. Emma reported four role demands which included three children under the age of twelve (each of which constitutes one role demand) and her part time paid employment undertaken out of financial necessity. Emma was able to elaborate on the nature of her role demands by outlining a typical day:

"I wouldn't say it was easy bringing up three young girls, working part time and studying full time, with my husband working full time too, but somehow we manage.....I'm up at 6.30 am because I have to get the children ready for school and that can take ages. My husband's already left so I take the children to school early because I have to get to a class by 9.00 am. In the afternoon I go to work,

then I pick up the kids from school, get their tea and get stuck into my work until my husband comes home."

Within this tight time frame, Emma also pointed out some of the difficulties involved in studying at home with the demands of her children upon her time:

"many times the children fight, the youngest begins to cry, usually over nothing, and the eldest stomps off in a temper tantrum because I or her dad has told her off."

Clearly, it is difficult for Emma to study in the evenings because she cannot concentrate with the children constantly disturbing her. She feels that she has "one ear on them and the other on the television" which her husband is watching whilst she studies in the kitchen. She acknowledges that since she returned to higher education she has maintained the same standard of homecare and is under pressure to keep up with household management because her husband was not supportive of her decision to study. This is largely because Emma had to reduce her full time hours to part time and because her husband works on a building site, there is little job security and he is sometimes unemployed for many weeks. Emma reports that her husband couldn't see the "sense" in her wanting to study full time for three years when she could be earning money. Given this overt opposition to her student role, Emma had no expectation that her husband would support her financially. Emma reports that the children feel the same way about her reduced income and illustrated this with an example. Emma's second daughter wanted a new skirt for school, but because it was unaffordable she had to wait until the end of term. Emma recalls the guilt she felt over this incident. She recognised that if she was still working full time she could have purchased the skirt and it would not have become "such a major source of stress". Although Emma takes the main responsibility for child care and feels that she has to maintain the same standards in the home despite her roles as student and worker, she adds:

"I'm lucky that I actually enjoy working in the library and I enjoy my course, but given a choice, I would give up the job today."

7.4.3 Inter-role conflict and life satisfaction

Emma's scores on the inter-role conflict scale suggest that she experiences the highest conflict between her work and parental roles (18/20), followed by parent and self roles (13/15). Some conflict was evident between her work and self roles (14/20) and between her spouse and self roles (12/20). The least conflict was reported between her spousal and parental roles (3/15) and between her work and spousal roles (5/20). Data from the interview with Emma helps to illustrate the nature of these conflicts.

7.4.3.1 Work vs. parent

Emma reports experiencing the maximum amount of conflict between her work and parental roles. The work role in this context represents both paid employment and full time study. She explained that several changes had to take place when she became a student which may have contributed to this conflict. Firstly, her full-time job as a librarian meant that she could collect the children from school during dinner time for a cooked family meal at home. This arrangement was no longer possible with Emma's new hours at work so the children had to take sandwiches to school for lunch. The children resented this change in their routine and blamed their mother. Secondly, Emma's evenings were spent with the children, "watching television, playing games, knitting or baking". Since her degree started, Emma has been unable to continue spending her time this way because she has coursework to complete. Once again, the children have responded negatively to this change. Thirdly, the children have been assigned household chores in order to keep them busy and to help ease the load from Emma. However, this has also caused problems:

"They (children) are old enough to take some responsibility for clearing their bedroom and organising themselves better. I'm not asking for much, but you'd think from their reaction that I was."

Although Emma is "willing to put up with their tantrums and complaints" until they get used to the new arrangements, she feels distressed at having to go through the process daily. She also reported that this is made worse when her husband joins in. Emma reports feeling tremendous guilt about spending less time with her children and "forcing them into a new routine". However, she acknowledges that she has given them "a good start in life" and hopes to set the example that "an education is important". She identified specific

incidents where she felt torn between her studies and looking after the children or attending school functions:

"If the children are ill, I'm naturally expected to give up a lecture or take time off work to be with them."

Her husband and children are under the impression that her work isn't very important or serious and that she can catch up on lost time by copying from someone else's notes. Emma finds this particular attitude very difficult to manage and points out particular problems during school half term. At this time, the children have to spend more time with their aunties or grandparent's. Emma feels that she has no choice but to arrange such child care within her family and that it is better for the children to socialise with other relatives:

"It's not like I can just take an entire week off to baby sit, but they just can't appreciate my position because they are so used to me doing just that when I was working full time."

Emma claims that half term holidays are the worst and that this has a negative effect on her own motivation and concentration for study. Given the guilt she experiences, the continued difficulties posed by her children, and the lack of both emotional or financial support, it is little wonder that Emma reports such high conflict between her work and parental roles. Whilst she wants to succeed in both, she is clearly having difficulty in adjusting one to the other. Her children are used to a routine whereby their mother is always there for them and where they have always been priority. However, Emma is now struggling to maintain two equal priorities and is currently finding these incompatible.

7.4.3.2 Self vs. spouse

Emma reported a high degree of conflict between her self and spousal roles (13/15). She acknowledged that her husband opposed her return to education. Her husband is not secure in his employment as there can be several weeks in-between jobs. At these times he is unemployed and this causes the family considerable financial strain. Emma recalled that her husband was angry and unreasonable with her decision to reduce her working hours. She said that he often commented in the following way:

"I hope you know what you're doing, you're on your own with this."

Emma also reported that ever since she began her course, her husband criticised her about "the filthy house, the cooking, the children, the washing the this and the that" She recalls that she expected some resistance but was surprised at the extent of it. That resistance continues:

"Since I started the course we have argued about everything. It never used to be this bad, we just used to bubble on with our lives.... but now it's fireworks all the time. I think he resents me doing the degree, he certainly hasn't made things easier."

Emma recalled feeling under stimulated in the library, but continued with this job because "it kept the family ticking over". She felt that she would have to find a more challenging, better paid job and one that she could consider as a career. With all the children attending school, she considered that it was the right time to plan for the future. She doesn't regret starting her course, but she does report the need for some support now and then from her husband and children. Her relatives were also surprised with Emma's decision to study and expressed their concern by asking her why she was "so willing to jeopardise" her family life for "the sake of books"? When Emma was asked about her family's attitude to education, her reply suggested that they thought she was too old to resume an education:

"It's something you do as a youngster, when you are single and without children, a mortgage and bills to pay, it's not for women like me."

However, Emma did not feel that this attitude should prevent her from achieving her degree. She reported that she was determined not to give up because "it's just what everyone expects of me". She suggested to her husband that he might like to consider doing a course, especially as he would qualify for a full grant. However she recalls that his response was not positive:

"Don't be so daft, the sooner you come to your senses and see your mistake, the better things will be for all of us."

Emma feels that the conflict between her husband and herself is "harmless" and that he is "sulking because he can't have his own way, so he will continue to moan". She also feels that there may be some jealousy because her husband is unqualified, but would very much welcome an opportunity to develop his skills in design and carpentry.

Although Emma reports the conflict between her husband and herself as harmless, she acknowledged that she found it distressing. She recognised that support from him would make things much easier for her, especially in changing her children's attitude and that of her relatives. Although it is difficult to speculate on Emma's husband's view point, it would seem that he is also put out by the change in his lifestyle and is concerned for their financial future. It is possible that he continues to display his displeasure as an attempt to pressurise Emma into returning back to full time work.

7.4.3.3 Work vs. self

Although Emma enjoys her job as a librarian and has worked full time for four years, she reported experiencing some conflict between her work and self roles. She explained this particular conflict by identifying her 'self' role as being her student role, and her 'work' role as her employment. She explained that she is very good at her job partly because she has been there for several years and is familiar with the work. However, since becoming a part-time worker, the other staff have expected her to work as hard as the full-time staff and Emma has found it difficult to refuse some of the responsibility and consequently found herself working through her breaks in order to complete all her tasks. She reported that this particular problem has subsided somewhat recently, but that she still had to work much harder than she should as a part timer:

"I'm always given the busiest shifts, so that they get the maximum out of me. They store up all sorts of jobs for me that no one else can be bothered to doI only know this because I've been there full-time for long enough."

Although Emma had to reduce her hours by less than half, she feels that the work load has not been proportionally reduced. She doesn't want to appear slack, but neither does she want to give anyone the opportunity to exploit her part time status:

"It's only my hours that have been reduced, not my status, but some of the jobs I'm allocated should be done by the assistants, not by me.....re-labelling or re-shelving all afternoon."

These are monotonous tasks which require tremendous amounts of energy, whilst all the easier and more interesting tasks have either been done or are allocated to someone else. Emma feels that it is hard to maintain enthusiasm and motivation for such demeaning tasks, especially when she has had to "work hard all morning concentrating on difficult lectures and trying to master new topics". Similarly, if she is attending a lecture after working in the library, she finds it hard to apply herself to a more stimulating and challenging task.

One of the biggest and most difficult changes Emma has noticed at work is that she is frequently excluded from conversation and out of hours activities. She comments:

"It's as if I'm another person all of a sudden and that they've never known me...it's stupid."

Emma feels that this change in attitude stems from the reduced contact she now has with the staff because of their demands of her student role. She reported that when she worked full-time she had more interpersonal contact throughout the day and socialised some evenings and week-ends with her work colleagues. However, Emma has been unable to maintain this degree of contact and feels that staff are under the impression that she has "abandoned them for new student friends". When Emma was asked about friends on the course, she replied:

"Lots of mothers are in a similar situation as me, we just get on with the work and get home, to do more work. Unfortunately, there's never the time to get to know the others better, though I'd like to."

Emma's work vs. self conflict stems in part from attempting to maintain high standards at work and her relationship with the staff, whilst also attempting to achieve high results in her studies. Both roles require considerable time and effort and with little support from staff at work and from her family, Emma is rather isolated in these tasks. The change in attitude towards Emma from the library staff has left her feeling even more alone and

unsupported, and she feels guilty at having lost friendships that were obviously a comfort to her.

7.4.3.4 Work vs. spouse and parent vs. spouse

Emma's lowest conflict scores occurred between her spouse and work roles (5/20) and between her parental and spousal roles (3/15). She explained the contradiction between low conflict scores and the frequent arguments between her husband and herself. She explained that questionnaire items like 'feeling it is more important for your spouse to succeed in their work versus feeling it is more important for you to succeed in your work', elicited the 'no conflict' response. This is because neither Emma or her husband have ever been in a position where they have "crossed paths" in their working lives. They both have very separate and different jobs and neither has interfered with the other. Emma acknowledged that one of the reasons for this is the different roles they have. Her husband works long hours including most week ends. He takes responsibility for maintaining the home in good repair and looking after the garden. She takes responsibility for care of the children and the home, preparing the meals, washing clothes and ironing. Emma regards these roles as separate:

"There is no reason why either task should interfere with the other, so thankfully this is one area that presents little conflict."

Those arguments that do occur are usually concerned with the quality of performance of the partners' tasks. For example, Emma reported that the bathroom shelf had fallen off the wall (because the youngest child had been climbing on it earlier) and she let her husband know that there was a problem with it in a way that implied criticism:

"I took the opportunity to nag him until he fixed it, well he does the same to me,"

She justified this by recalling that her husband:

"begins to fuss if he thinks the ironing isn't going to be done on time, even when the washing hasn't even dried."

Similarly, when Emma is with the children her husband is pleased to have:

"some time in peace and quiet on his own to relax, so he's hardly going to call me away from them, or have them come to him, when he could be enjoying the telly in peace."

This example assists in understanding the 'no conflict' response reported between wanting to spend time with your spouse versus wanting to spend time with your children. Emma explained that she and her husband "fell in to separate lives" after the eldest child was born and have remained that way ever since.

In some way the lack of conflict between the spouse and work or spouse and parent roles is not indicative of a harmonious relationship. However, by keeping areas of each others life out of reach, responsibility is divided and each partner maintains their share of tasks so reducing the potential for conflict. This explains why Emma feels under pressure to maintain as much of her pre-student routine as she can. This long established system of separate responsibilities takes no account of Emma's full-time degree course or part-time employment in addition to her child care and household responsibilities. It is therefore not surprising that Emma's husband, children and relatives find her return to education problematic. They are not willing to consider their responsibilities and consequently, they blame Emma for the disruption they are experiencing.

7.4.4 Coping and life satisfaction

Emma reported some insight into the types of coping strategies she used in order to cope with her multiple roles. She regards timing as very important, explaining that she can't afford to waste time, and that delays inevitably lead to further problems. More specifically she recalled that:

"If the children aren't ready to leave the house by eight, tough, we're leaving. Any later and there's traffic jams, and waiting around and then I'm late for the lecture, well thats done it then.....there's always an excuse, oh I have to pack my bag, I'm not dressed, I haven't finished my breakfast...Now I say, we're out of here in five minutes and five minutes it is....ready or not."

Emma reported that she has made progress but acknowledges that it was hard work. She also stressed the importance of planning ahead and recognised that this could save a lot of

heartache and time. For example, after washing and ironing clothes for the children and her husband she often hides some away for when they need to wear something specific. This avoids stress later when they need, for example, a white shirt for school. Emma also sets her own deadlines for work that has to be handed in and plans her household tasks around her assignments.

On the coping inventory Emma reported using emotion-focused coping the most frequently (43/80), followed by problem-focused (34/80) with 'less effective' coping being used the least (31/80). With regards to 'less effective' coping Emma confirmed that she does 'get upset and lets her emotions out' (venting of emotions 12/16), usually on the children, but also with her husband:

"Somedays they drive me mad, they quibble over nothing, fight with each other, refuse to listen and even shout back if I tell them to shut up. Then I get angry and shout at them all and send them into different rooms until they can behave..... my husband starts to moan because he thinks he's had a hard day and naturally it's all my fault that he has to work so hard."

Emma reported worrying about "everything all the time". She worries about succeeding in her course, her children, her financial situation and her relationship with colleagues at work. She explained that this is because she feels responsible for her situation. Her high score on acceptance coping (14/16) suggests that Emma accepts the reality of a situation and learns to live with it. However, coupled with her low score on behavioural disengagement (5/16), she does not give up the attempt to gain her goal, despite her acceptance of her situation. There is further support for this notion in that Emma has a positive outlook and continues to hold an optimistic view of the future. Again this coping strategy is reflected in 'positive interpretation and growth' (8/16). Clearly, she feels that she can change her life and will continue to strive for a better future. She is currently very dissatisfied with many aspects of her life and hopes to make some significant changes. Her problem-focused coping strategies, (e.g. active and planning strategies) ensure that she maintains both her focus and her efforts to bring about change.

Emma reports using emotion-focused coping much of the time, because she is under considerable emotional strain. However, she is using fewer 'less effective' coping strategies and, once her distress is controlled, her preferred coping strategy is problem-focused.

7.4.5 Conclusion

Emma is currently experiencing many changes in her life which are causing her much distress, guilt and dissatisfaction. The decision to reduce her working hours and, therefore, her income in order to resume her education, has been met with much disagreement. Emma's husband and children have become accustomed to a specific life style which she has changed in order to incorporate her new student role. Consequently, these changes have been met with hostility and resistance by her husband, children, relatives and even her colleagues at work. It would appear that much of Emma's dissatisfaction is derived from the reactions she receives from those around her. She is experiencing a high number of roles demands which she takes sole responsibility for maintaining to the same high standards she achieved before returning to education. Emma is also experiencing many conflicts between her major roles, particularly those that are the most important to her, namely her studies and her student role. She is also having to maintain high standards in other roles (for example her spousal role) in order to keep the conflict between this role and other roles at a minimum. Her main coping strategies are emotion-focused, but her second preferred coping strategy is problem-focused. This is evident in the continued efforts and optimism Emma holds for the future.

7.5 Sheila: A case study of high life satisfaction in education

7.5.1 Background

This case study is presented because it provides a typical example of a woman in full time education reporting a high life satisfaction. Data gathered from interview with Sheila is used to illustrate some of the major findings presented in the quantitative research. This data will be considered under the main subheadings used in the quantitative analysis.

Sheila is married with four children aged eight, ten, fourteen and fifteen years of age. Her husband works full time in management as a chartered engineer and is also doing an MSc course. Sheila is currently beginning her final year of a three year degree in psychology. She reports spending approximately 70-80 hours a week on her studies, which she enjoys very much. Sheila's scores on her life satisfaction questionnaire indicate that she is very satisfied with her 'life style' (21/24), her 'personal life' (27/30) and her 'standards and achievements' (25/30). Before Sheila's return to education she was a full time housewife and, previous to that, she worked full-time as a professional interviewer for a market research company. Sheila returned to education because she was bored and felt unappreciated and partly because her husband insisted that she should give it a chance.

7.5.2 Role demands and life satisfaction

The results from study two showed that up to three role demands were associated with high life satisfaction and more than three role demands were associated with low life satisfaction. Sheila reported two role demands which included her two children under the age of twelve. However, Sheila explained that she receives substantial help from her husband, her older children and her friends and this helps with the management of her parental responsibilities. This suggests that her two children might not constitute 'demands' in the normal sense. Sheila has a good system of sharing the responsibility for her children with other people so that she does not have too much to do on her own:

"Some days someone will pick up for me and when I'm free I'll pick up everybody else's children, it's just a case of changing people around, but that doesn't happen very often so that's not a problem."

At weekends her husband takes the children swimming and spends all day with them if Sheila has coursework to complete, and this allows her to study without distractions. Sheila acknowledges that she "has it easier than most women returning to education". She is financially secure and does not need or want to work part time "as many of the others have to" and her husband "shares more than half the housework and responsibility for the children", consequently, Sheila feels that there is no reason why she can't apply herself "whole-heartedly" to her course. The high level of support from her husband provides some contextual background for why her low role demands might be related to a high life satisfaction score.

7.5.3 Inter-role conflict and life satisfaction

Sheila's overall inter-role conflict score was low (39/110) and her individual item responses show the specific areas of conflict were between the roles of work, parent, spouse, and self. The highest conflict occurred between work vs. parent (11/20) and parent vs. self (7/15). An equal amount of conflict was reported between the roles of work vs. self, spouse vs self and work vs spouse (6/20). The lowest level of conflict was reported between spouse vs. parent roles (3/15). Data from interview with Sheila helps to illustrate the nature of this conflict.

7.5.3.1 work vs. parent and parent vs. self

Sheila explains that she sees little conflict between the roles of 'self' and 'student'. She pointed out that the latter role she also regarded as her 'work' role. For this reason the conflict between her parent vs. work and self role will be considered together. She reports that it is problematic having children at the GCSE stage of education because they need help with their coursework whilst Sheila is trying to complete her own:

"the problem is that they actually want my help....I try to give them some of my time, but as soon as they go to bed or sit in front of the T.V. I go up to the breakfast room and get on with my own work."

Sheila emphasises the importance of her own work and spends every hour she can on it, whilst giving her children the attention they need:

"I spend every hour that I've got, everyday that they're not here, well like this morning I got up the same time as usual and when they all went to school and by 8.30 I'd be sat down into my work and I spend all day doing that."

Her dedication to the role of student is clear but the fact that she spends 70-80 hours a week studying can lead her to perceive any distraction as a source of conflict. She provides an example of this:

"I am so dedicated, I work so hard, very often I'm sitting there thinking I really could do with looking through this book and making notes and my son will say 'could you look at my turtle I've coloured him in' and I really want to say forget your turtle, can I carry on, but I don't. I stop and I then discuss the turtle.....I think it's very important, but I must admit I do find it difficult because I'm so engrossed in my work."

Sheila reports that whilst she is fortunate with the support she has from her family, which gives her time to dedicate to her studies, she nonetheless finds it difficult not to allow her studies to consume all of her time at the expense of her relationship with her children.

7.5.3.2 Work vs. self

Sheila enjoys her course very much:

"I absolutely love what we're doing here."

The course of study has great personal value and has influenced the way she thinks about her life style. Whilst she was once preoccupied with how clean and tidy her home looked, this is now not so important and "the house has gone to pot". This change in attitude demonstrates the extent to which Sheila's 'self' has changed from consisting of her housewife status to a definition based largely on her student status. She regards the latter as her work role and uses this to explain the low conflict between her work and self roles (6/20).

"I used to actually want the children to have nice, clean, tidy bedrooms, it was important but now I don't see that as important, so long as they're happy..."

Sheila emphasises the extent to which she had other concerns and priorities before she became a student:

"All the time I used to spend doing housework and decorating ...I was very much the housewife and mother, a very much 'oh my house is cleaner than everyone else's and my children are smart and their shirts are white.'.."

Although Sheila acknowledges that she has changed, she also recalls that the change was not an easy one at first. When she first began her degree course she recalls feeling very guilty for neglecting her duties and her children. She felt that her place was "behind the children". At times the distress was so severe that she would cry on her way to the university and often felt that she should leave the course:

"Within a week I was reduced to tears, I'm not a decent mother, I'm neglecting the children. I was in tears every morning, crying my eyes out all the way down the road saying this isn't what I should be doing... I should be spraying leaves and putting glitter on for Christmas."

However Sheila asserts "now I have changed my mind, my whole attitude has changed", but explains that it took six months of reacting in this way before she could accept that not only was she obtaining excellent grades for her coursework, but she was also enjoying studying.

7.5.3.3 Work vs. spouse and self vs. spouse

Given that Sheila has identified her 'self' and work roles as being the same, the reported conflict between her spousal vs work and self roles will be examined together. She reports experiencing very little conflict between her work and spousal roles (6/20) and between her self and spousal roles (6/20) because the relationship between herself and her husband is very good. He makes the effort to give Sheila the time and the space to complete her work and this is done by taking the children for the day as well as sharing the household tasks:

"my husband does all the shopping, because he likes shopping and because I don't drive he does anything that requires a car. He takes the children everywhere, hangs the washing and sorts it out."

Sheila appreciates her husband's help and support particularly because he also works full time and is currently studying for a Masters degree. The fact that he is a student means that Sheila knows he understands the pressures. Indeed, it was her husband that encouraged Sheila to return to education because he considered that she needed an additional interest in her life. He was supportive throughout Sheila's first six months as a student when she was struggling to adjust to her new role:

"he (husband) said 'you don't have to do it, you can pack up, it's up to you'....and he'd say 'what marks did you get?' I'd say ' I did well' and he'd say 'well carry on then' and it was him that made me carry on."

The sense of closeness between Sheila and her husband and the quality of their relationship is evident from her interview. Sheila reports that they both enjoy playing sport some evenings and, when they can, they also study together:

"2 or 3 evenings a week we go to our sports and have a couple of drinks after and come home. One day a week he works in the dining room and I work in the breakfast room and we stop at 10.30am and have coffee together and discuss how far we've got with our work, and on Sundays we come into the library together."

From Sheila's account of her relationship with her husband, it would seem that they have several shared interests which allow them to develop together and understand each other. The shared responsibility for the children and the home also contributes to their relationship and to the low inter-role conflict experienced by Sheila between her spousal vs. work and self roles.

7.5.3.4 Spouse vs. parent

Sheila emphasised the importance of maintaining a good family life as well as succeeding in her studies. She aims to give her children the attention they require as well as continuing to maintain a close relationship with her husband and this is done by preventing conflict arising between her spousal and parental roles. One way in which Sheila ensures this is by sharing common interests with her husband and spending the allocated time developing those interests. Sheila also reports that it is helpful having two older children as they can also attend to the younger ones, and are available to baby-sit when she wants to spend time with her husband.

It would seem that there is little conflict between her various roles. She reports high satisfaction for her family life and this is evident from her account. She is satisfied with her relationship with her husband and feels that they have many similar interests, and again this is evident from the low reported conflict between her spousal and self roles. Sheila feels that there are certain advantages in studying later in life and this can lead to a reduction in the distress and conflicts some younger students experience:

"The youngsters have still got to lead a pretty good social life, make friends, meet boyfriends...and that's a necessary part of growing up. Sometimes they say, 'well are you going to come to this or that...' and I think, well if I was 18 or 19 then yes, but I've done that, I've been to those places....I'm not lacking in social life and if I stay in and study...I'm not giving anything up because I enjoy it and I'm doing what I want."

It would seem that Sheila is doing what she wants and is both enjoying it and excelling in it. She has a lot of emotional and practical support from her husband and children. Sheila feels fortunate in being able to apply herself without the financial pressures or the pressures to socialise largely because she has a secure basis.

7.5.4 Coping and life satisfaction

Sheila's coping inventory suggested that she used problem-focused coping strategies the most frequently (66/80), followed by emotion-focused coping (48/80), with 'less effective' coping being reported the least (35/80). On closer inspection Sheila reported using 'planning' and 'seeking instrumental support' to the maximum (16/16). This is also evident in her interview where she reports organising herself, and others around her in order to function more effectively. The support available to her comes from both her husband and her children and Sheila feels able to talk to them about issues of concern. There is also a high usage of 'active' coping, which entails taking direct action or concentrating efforts on resolving a problem. Sheila's constant hard work to overcome areas of weakness in her studies provides one example of active coping. Another example is that in order to be sure that she did not have to collect and deliver her children to school everyday by herself, she arranged for several people to collect all the children at different times. This arrangement has worked well and has saved her time. In sharp

contrast to active coping, Sheila reports the lowest scores for 'behavioural disengagement'. This is characterised by reducing efforts or giving up trying to achieve something. Sheila takes control of her life and uses situations to work for her rather than giving up. For example, when Sheila struggled in her first six months in her student role, she wanted to resign from her course, however, she persisted until she stopped feeling guilty. This persistence is also reflected in Sheila's maximum scores on 'acceptance' coping, which is the acceptance that a stressor is real. Not only does Sheila accept that her stressors are real, she also takes the necessary action to deal with them and then to learn and grow from them ('positive interpretation and growth' 13/16). Sheila feels that she can view her stressors with some 'humour' and with optimism and this allows her to feel that they are manageable, especially when she has the necessary support around her. One interesting response to Sheila's coping questionnaire was that she reported using 'mental disengagement' (8/16) much more than any other 'less effective' coping strategy. However, on closer inspection of her response items, it appears that Sheila has rated the maximum to the questions 'I turn to work or other substitute activities to take my mind off things'. Sheila explained that she was often preoccupied with thoughts about her studies and it caused her concern if she couldn't spend her time studying, so by actually doing so she is taking her "mind off things". Sheila also feels that "by being able to get on with coursework", she kept her distress to a minimum. This is perhaps reflected in her very low scores on 'venting emotions', which is characteristic of 'getting upset and letting emotions out'. By actually engaging in her course work for 70-80 hours a week, Sheila is able to keep most of her distressing emotions at bay and this is also aided by her very supportive family.

Conclusion

Sheila's case study provides several examples which illustrate and explain why she would report a very high life satisfaction score, low inter-role conflict, and effective coping strategies. Although the process is undoubtedly an interactive one, in that her inter-role conflicts and coping strategies inter-relate, this case study nonetheless illustrates a typical example of a woman who combines her multiple roles effectively and reports high satisfaction in many areas of her life.

Sheila has two main role demands (her two children under twelve), which she manages well with the help of friends, her husband and older children. Her reported inter-role conflict suggests that she has a satisfactory balance between all her roles. Sheila admits that she experiences frequent conflict between wanting to dedicate all of her time to her studies, and wanting to spend quality time with her children. She has a very good relationship with her husband, who encourages her to succeed in her studies and ensures that she has the time and space in which to do this. Both Sheila and her husband have many similar interests, and both share equal responsibility for their children and the household tasks. Overall, Sheila feels in control of her life and is enjoying the new challenge of the student role. Her coping strategies suggest that she deals actively and effectively with problems as they occur. Sheila's whole way of life has changed for the better since she returned to education. Clearly, she values herself much more and acknowledges that she has more respect from her children and she is much happier with her new roles:

"I'm no longer the person who keeps the house clean."

7.6 Summary

Each of the case studies presented will be examined in terms of how they illustrate and provide elaboration of some of the salient issues which arise from the quantitative studies. Barbara, in reporting six role demands is illustrative of the finding from study two that having more than three role demands is associated with low life satisfaction. Further analysis of Barbara's case has revealed more detail about the problematic nature of some of these demands in terms of inter-role conflict. For example, that the role of worker is in substantial conflict with the role of parent and with the role of self. To what extent this is the result of an individual attempting to maintain too many roles simultaneously or as a result of a socialisation process which makes it particularly difficult for women to return to full-time work after childbirth, is not clear. Certainly, in Barbara's case, the tension is enhanced by the lack of support available from her husband and her employers. Clearly the implication for Barbara, and many of the women who fall within the design cell of 'worker reporting low life satisfaction' is that she feels rather marginal. In other words, she does not feel part of either her work role or her parental role and this impinges upon her levels of life satisfaction. Not surprisingly, she feels powerless to change her situation and tends to favour 'acceptance' as a typical coping strategy in response to the considerable demands in her life.

Diane, in reporting two role demands, is illustrative of the finding from study two that having up to three role demands is associated with high life satisfaction. Further analysis of Diane's case has revealed more detail about the factors which contribute to the high levels of life satisfaction she reports. For example, the amount of conflict between the role of parent is reduced in comparison to Barbara because Diane can work flexible hours and has sufficient income to afford to engage a nanny to look after her son. Whilst Diane still recognises and has to cope with many of the same issues in relation to her work role, she is in a more powerful position compared to Barbara because she is engaged in a career which she finds rewarding and has a key position within her organisation. These factors in association with support from her spouse, have influenced her sense of control over her life. This sense of control is something which is in stark contrast to the helplessness and lack of control presented by Barbara. Despite this assertion, it is not a

simple association between 'control' and life satisfaction because there are many other factors that interact in this relationship. Indeed, there may be substantial individual differences, for example, intelligence, which it has not been possible to include in this thesis. However, it is clear that there is an interaction between the individual and their environment, which is substantially associated with life satisfaction.

Emma, in reporting four role demands, is illustrative of the finding from study two that having more than three role demands is associated with low life satisfaction. Further analysis of Emma's case has revealed more explicit detail about the nature of these demands and more information about how they are experienced by the participant. This participant shares similar problems as Barbara. Emma's husband and children are not supportive of her decision to return to education and so, in many ways, she is isolated in having to cope with the new student role in addition to her existing roles as parent, spouse and self. Indeed, the lack of support is quite hostile in many ways and clearly has a substantial impact upon levels of life satisfaction. Also, in common with Barbara, Emma experiences the most conflict between her parental and worker roles, whether worker is defined as employment, full-time education or both. Once again the interview data leaves the impression of a 'marginal' individual experiencing considerable feelings of guilt because she does not feel fully a part of either her work role or her parental role. Perhaps the most obvious difference between Barbara and Emma is that Emma does not demonstrate the same sense of helplessness illustrated by Barbara's case. Whilst the financial situation is still critical and the support from the family poor or non-existent, Emma is undertaking a course in higher education which she perceives will lead to better things. Indeed, she has taken that decision herself, against considerable opposition, and clearly has a sense of control over her own destiny. This may account for Emma's more positive interpretation of the lack of support from her husband. Equally, of course, it may be that her relationship with her spouse is fundamentally better than Barbara's.

A comparison of Emma and Diane's experiences of paid work reveals some distinct similarities despite their very different circumstances. For example, both women have clearly experienced shifts in attitude towards work, which might be indicative of

pressures commonly experienced by women in the workplace. Both women report feeling less involved in the work environment, particularly the social aspects, because of the other role demands they face. Both women are very aware of the need to maintain high standards at work. Emma and Diane give the impression that they feel under more scrutiny in their work role because of the additional role demands they have. Clearly, these factors impinge upon general underlying stress levels and contribute to the sense of marginality referred to earlier.

Sheila, in reporting two role demands is illustrative of the finding from study two that having up to three role demands is associated with high life satisfaction. In common with Diane, who is a 'worker' reporting high life satisfaction, she enjoys a good relationship with her spouse who, together with her older children, provides substantial help. Sheila also reports low levels of inter-role conflict but, once again, most conflict was reported in combining the role of 'worker' and 'parent'. She is very enthusiastic about her chosen role of student which she does not separate from her 'self' role. Once again, she does appear to have some sense of control over her life so, although similar conflicts are experienced, these are not perceived as affecting levels of life satisfaction as much as in the low life satisfaction cells.

The case studies reveal accounts which are typical of the quantitative findings in relation to life satisfaction and coping strategies. Results from study two showed that the low life satisfaction group used significantly more 'less effective' coping strategies, when compared with the high life satisfaction group. However, within 'less effective' coping, the low life satisfaction group were using significantly more 'mental disengagement' coping strategies. The account by Barbara (worker with low life satisfaction) reflects a very high score on emotion-focused coping, followed by 'less effective' coping and with problem-focused coping being the least preferred. Similarly, Emma, Barbara's student counterpart on low life satisfaction, also reported a marked preference for emotion-focused coping, followed by problem-focused coping with 'less effective' coping being reported as the least preferred strategy. The fundamental difference between Barbara and Emma is that although both scored very high on 'acceptance' coping (the mental

interpretation that a stressor is real), Barbara also used a high degree of 'behavioural disengagement' and very little 'active' coping. Her situation is one where she does not take active measures to bring about change. In fact she resigns from trying to change her situation. In contrast, Emma accepts her situation, but also 'positively reinterprets' it so that she can learn and grow from her experience. Moreover, unlike Barbara, Emma scored very low on 'behavioural disengagement' and this further illustrates her efforts to pursue her goal. Both Barbara and Emma find themselves in unsupportive environments, (emotionally, practically and financially) and both report low life satisfaction and high levels of distress in combining multiple roles. Therefore, it is not surprising that both women report using a very high degree of emotion-focused coping because these coping strategies serve to control and reduce distressing emotions. However, in Emma's case, once her distressing emotions are controlled, she then moves on to more effective coping strategies, such as the problem-focused ones.

Both Diane and Sheila (worker and student with high life satisfaction) report using more typical coping strategies for their life satisfaction group. Both women report using problem-focused coping most often, followed by emotion-focused coping, with 'less effective' coping being used the least. Diane's favoured coping strategy is 'active' coping, which involves taking direct action to resolve a stressor. She also engages in 'planning' to control her stress levels, but whether these coping preferences are due to individual differences in personality or circumstances, is not possible to determine from this data alone. Indeed, Sheila in common with Diane, uses problem-focused coping strategies most frequently and perhaps this serves to increase their sense of control. For example, Sheila reports using 'planning' and 'seeking instrumental support' to the maximum and 'behavioural disengagement' to the minimum.

Both Diane and Sheila have the emotional, practical and financial support from their spouses and family and from hired help. This support removes much of the pressure and sense of isolation experienced by Barbara and Emma, who do not have the same level of support. Both women expressed a strong desire to control their lives and organise it so that it served to benefit them rather than cause them additional difficulties. This is

consistent with their low scores on 'mental disengagement' (distraction from the task) and high scores on not only 'acceptance' of their situation, but also 'positive reinterpretation' so that stressful encounters are reframed more positively.

In conclusion, a comparison of the four cases chosen as 'typical' of their design cell suggests some shared experiences amongst all four women. In particular, it is clear that they all experience inter-role conflict when attempting to met the demands of their 'worker/student' role and the 'parental' role. However, how and the extent to which this impinges upon reported life satisfaction is influenced by the nature and quality of the spousal relationship, the nature of the preferred coping strategies used, and the extent to which there is some sense of personal choice and control in one or more roles. It is not possible to specify the precise nature of the interaction between these factors without considerable further research. This would necessarily include consideration of individual differences such as intelligence, as well as economic and familial variables.

CHAPTER EIGHT

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The aim of this final chapter is to reconsider the main findings from the studies presented in this thesis, in the context of the current literature. Four key findings will be discussed. These will be addressed in terms of how and to what extent they support the existing literature as well as the extent to which they refute or contradict that literature. New and anomalous findings are revisited and discussed particularly with regards to their implications for practice and research. Finally, a critique of the research is presented and areas for future research are identified.

8.1 Issues of contention and implications

The first key finding provides information on the types of role strain which most frequently occur in women's lives. The results from diary data in study one showed that it was inter-role conflict which occurs most frequently when multiple roles are combined. The second most frequently occurring role strain is role overload. These findings provide support for the Scarcity Hypothesis (Goode 1960; Coser 1974), which states that multiple role involvement leads to negative effects. In supporting this position, the results contradict the Role Accumulation Hypothesis (Sieber 1974; Mark 1977), which states that role combination benefits the individual by increasing factors such as well-being, self esteem, and happiness. The findings from this study add support to the notion that combining multiple roles actually leads to role strain. In so doing, study one presents novel data which not only identifies the specific types of role strain, but also demonstrates how frequently they occur. In this study, inter-role conflict was specifically identified and was distinguished from the notion of role overload. This is an important distinction given that the two concepts have often been interchangeably used and are sometimes combined to denote the more general concept of role strain.

In distinguishing between the two concepts, the assumption that their effects are the same is questioned. Inter-role conflict involves an incompatibility of role demands, and this

invariably leads to the prioritising of one type of role demand over another. The effects of this upon the individual includes guilt and feelings of not achieving total success in all role demands. However, in the case of role overload, as long as role demands are not incompatible, the individual tends to continue exerting effort towards completing demands over a period of time. When time is no longer available the task remains unfinished, but despite this, there is no issue of prioritising some role demands over others. A long term consequence of continued inter-role conflict and role overload is likely to be less effective performance in certain roles and a high level of distress and even illness. One implication of this is that organisations should take active measures to reduce levels of inter-role conflict, and role overload, so that individuals are not forced to rely on their own resources to manage stress levels. Moreover, Rain, Lane and Steiner (1991) reported that stress at work has been significantly and consistently linked to job dissatisfaction and report a strong link between job satisfaction and life satisfaction. They also report a strong relationship between job dissatisfaction, absenteeism and staff turnover. Therefore, the continued effects of role strain might, in the long term, have negative consequences for both the organisation and the individual.

For the purpose of psychological intervention, it is necessary to identify the specific roles which are causing the incompatibility. The results from study two suggest that the highest degree of conflict occurred between combining the 'work' role with the 'parental' role. The second highest conflict occurred between the 'self' role and the roles of 'work' and 'parent'. These results provide areas for psychological intervention for work-family roles. The parent-child relationship is affected by demands from the work role, which in turn influence the work role. The interview data suggests that individuals struggle with parental responsibilities when work demands are high and vice versa. It seems that employment organisations would benefit from considering the overall welfare needs of their employees, particularly with regard to their parenting roles, if they are to retain a happy and productive workforce. The extent of the conflict between the self and the work and parental roles, suggest that the own needs, desires and interests of the individual are being denied, particularly when work and parental responsibilities are high. The recognition and development of the 'self' is of utmost concern in humanist psychology and

this study suggests that employing organisations could gain much from a better understanding of the approaches adopted by Maslow (1962) and Roger (1951), which emphasise 'self-actualisation', free-will and the congruity of 'self'.

The results for specific types of inter-role conflict also show the least amount of conflict between the 'spouse' and 'parent' roles. To some extent, this finding was anomalous because the explanation was very different to that expected. Interview data suggested that little conflict was reported between these roles largely because participants did not consider their spousal role to be as important as their parental role. Furthermore, participants invariably prioritised their parental role above their spousal role. The implications of this finding are far-reaching and are such that concerns are raised about the value given to the spousal role. This has consequences for when the parental responsibilities cease to be so demanding later in life when children grow up and leave home. These findings would benefit organisations such as RELATE by enabling them to identify and focus on potentially problematic areas, and to target meagre counselling resources accordingly. Perhaps, also the recently proposed parenting classes could incorporate these aspects into their training programmes to help new parents to be aware of the kinds of pressures they are likely to become susceptible to.

The second key finding provides support for the Scarcity Hypothesis at one level and for the Role Accumulation Hypothesis at another. Study two found that participants who had up to three role demands reported high life satisfaction, whereas those who had more than three role demands reported low life satisfaction. The Role Accumulation Hypothesis states that multiple role involvement is beneficial to the individual's well-being, and that a greater number of social roles, (regardless of their level of demands) is associated with enhanced well-being (Thoits 1992). On the other hand, the Scarcity Hypothesis proposes that the combination of 'too many' roles and role demands leads to negative effects on the individual's well-being. Certainly the results from study two suggest that role involvement has beneficial effects so long as a maximum of three role demands are not exceeded in combining multiple roles. Clearly, it is not only the number of role demands which influence reported life satisfaction, but the nature of the role combinations which

will to some extent, also determine the reported levels of inter-role conflict. However, when there are more than three role demands, (e.g. children under the age of twelve, caring for dependants other than children, or working out of financial necessity) then life satisfaction is low. These results provide novel findings and help clarify the position with reference to the Role Accumulation and Scarcity Hypothesis. They also have implications for psychological intervention and, in particular, for stress counselling services. For example, counsellors can aid in advising and informing individuals about the benefits of undertaking only a limited number of roles and role demands. This advice could include informing people of the possible consequences of undertaking 'too many' role demands. Currently, many individuals in our society are encouraged to participate in an increasingly large number of different roles, and there is substantial pressure to succeed in all areas of role involvement. Clearly, this often results in taking on too much and experiencing low life satisfaction and possibly ill health. Whilst life satisfaction was the measure used in relation to role demands, it seems likely that health could also be used as a potent measure. This is particularly likely given the findings of Rosenfield (1989) who argued that role overload creates symptoms of illness by the same process as having low power. She argued that too many role demands reduce perceptions of control and power and subsequently increase distress. This thesis strongly suggests that having more than three role demands (all of which constitute obligations and accrue costs), is likely to be associated with distress of this nature evidenced by reports of low life satisfaction detailed in the quantitative and case study data.

The third key finding, also from study one, identifies specific coping strategies used by participants in response to inter-role conflict and role overload. For inter-role conflict, the most frequently used coping strategy was an emotion-focused one. The least reported coping strategy was seeking assistance. For role overload, the most frequently reported strategy was superwoman coping with seeking assistance reported as not being used at all. These results provide some support for situation-determined coping because participants reported using different coping strategies for different types of situations. Despite this finding, personality cannot be disregarded because it is still possible that personality factors may have had an indirect influence. Some individuals are likely to be more prone

to the experience of specific role strains, and consequently, more susceptible to selecting specific kinds of coping strategies in response. These results also concur with Beutell and Greenhaus (1983) findings with their sample reporting 'reactive' (emotion-focused) coping strategies for inter-role conflict. Additional information is available from study one on the types of coping strategies used for inter-role conflict and the order of preference in which they are commonly used by the sample. These results provide support for Emmons, Biernat, Tiedje, Lange and Wortman (1990) who investigated the types of coping strategies used by women who combined multiple roles. Whilst they found four types (superwoman, time management, cognitive interpretation and divesting oneself of unimportant activities and responsibilities) they did not identify whether some role strains were linked with specific coping strategies. The results from the current study provides this additional information about both the specific types of role strain for which these particular coping strategies are used, as well as how often they are used.

Results from study one suggest that women who experience inter-role conflict use emotion-focused coping strategies because they have to endure their stressful situation (Carver and Scheier 1994). Emotion-focused coping strategies serve to reduce or control distressing emotions where situations are perceived to be uncontrollable. These results suggest that women who experience inter-role conflict are regularly having to adjust or endure situations which they find distressing. Similarly, with role overload there appears to be a tendency for women to do 'it all single handedly'. Perhaps this is in part due to the pressures on women to succeed as mothers, wives and workers, whilst also being successful individuals who have an identity separate to these roles. Such pressures can lead to feelings of incompetence and guilt if these women then fail to meet all role demands. Interestingly, seeking assistance was reported to be unavailable to many women. This finding suggests that either women respond emotionally to inter-role conflict (using superwoman coping strategies for role overload) because they are not given enough social support, or they do not encourage or ask for social support because it implies that they can not cope on their own. One issue to arise from the reported lack of social support from spouses is that it questions the equity of marital relations. Participants in this study often reported feeling that they were doing more than their spouse, and that this sometimes

contributed to conflict and resentment. It may also partly explain why the spousal role was perceived to be less important than other roles. On the other hand, many husbands may feel that they only have a minor role to play because their wives appear to want to do it all themselves. Consequently, they fail to take into account the extent of pressure felt by their wives to succeed in all roles. Again, these issues would be valuable for those engaged in counselling couples as well as providing health information which might help many women who clearly feel that they have to be superwomen.

The fourth key finding relates to neuroticism as a function of inter-role conflict and coping strategies. In the first instance, individuals high on the neuroticism scale reported experiencing the greater inter-role conflict on all role combinations. This finding supports the findings of Matuzek, Nelson and Quick (1995) who demonstrated that individuals with high levels of negative affectivity show greater distress and have low perceptions of control. Negative affectivity is considered to underlie neuroticism, and in some cases, the two concepts have been interchangeably used. It is possible that those individuals who report high levels of neuroticism also experience greater inter-role conflict because they perceive any difficult situation as one which is uncontrollable and highly distressing. Certainly Bolger (1990) argued that such relationships can be explained by an individuals reactivity to difficult situations rather than their exposure to difficulties. Alternatively, it is possible that the individuals who score high on neuroticism are actually more involved in social situations which are highly stressful purely by nature of their personalities. The relationship between neuroticism and coping may add further insight into the nature of this personality dimension. The results from study three show that those individuals who scored high on neuroticism, used fewer problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies and greater 'less effective' coping when compared with individuals who scored low on neuroticism. Although the results from study three provide support for the idea that individuals high on neuroticism make increased use of 'less effective' coping, the finding that the same individuals also use fewer emotion-focused coping strategies is somewhat anomalous. This finding contradicts current research which suggests increases in emotion-focused coping as neuroticism increases (Deary et al 1996; O'Brien and DeLongis (1996).

Decker and Borgen (1993), argued that individuals high on neuroticism showed a marked preference for 'less effective' coping because they perceive their stressful situations as highly distressing and uncontrollable. These findings suggest that psychological intervention could usefully be focused on those individuals who experience greater inter-role conflict and use fewer emotion-focused coping strategies. Eysenck (1967) argued that responses in individuals high on neuroticism are learned in their environment and can be changed, using behaviour therapy. It is possible to condition individuals to respond to stimuli in a less intense way, despite the biological role of the visceral brain in generating intense emotionality. Counter-conditioning in psychology can be applied to train individuals to react less adversely to negative stimuli. Successful counter-conditioning should ensure that the conditioning of positive reactions eliminates the former conditioning of intense emotions. Similarly, counselling techniques could be used to identify some of the reasons why individuals use 'less effective' coping strategies, such as behavioural disengagement, in preference to problem-focused coping which deals with the source of stress. By identifying and dealing with the underlying causes of behaviour, it should be possible to change the undesirable behaviour, or even to eliminate it permanently.

8.2 Critique

With each of the studies outlined, the issues of contention have already been discussed (see chapters four, five and six), as have the limitations of the methodologies which were used in these studies. It is the intention of this section to consider potential limitations at a more general level in terms of the extent to which these might influence the research. The main potential limitations which will be considered are a result of the cross-sectional design of the research. Two issues in particular have implications for the current research.

First, despite various advantages such as low costs, high response rates, rapid results, and time effectiveness, cross-sectional research design is not without its drawbacks. The first potential disadvantage worth consideration is the extent to which the diary and

questionnaire data are susceptible to 'time of measurement' effects. It is possible that several factors resulting from the time at which the data were collected might have influenced participants' responses. For example, during the data collection in 1990-94, there was extensive media coverage on the positive aspects of returning to work or education for a higher degree because this was considered to promote richer communications between couples. These positive messages would undoubtedly have influenced the way in which many women regarded their role combinations. This is likely to be particularly pertinent with reference to their work role and their spousal and parental responsibilities. However, in 1996 the media highlighted increasing concern about a rise in juvenile delinquency. This was attributed to a number of factors including a lack of parental control and supervision. The media coverage raised questions about the role parents played in determining their child's law-abiding behaviour and whether or not one parent should remain at home to supervise and exercise maximum influence over their children. Such questions and debates as these would clearly influence many women, perhaps causing them to question their role combinations and leading to feelings of guilt. Consequently, had the data been collected in 1996 rather than 1990-94, it is possible that the results may have been quite different. However, the 'time-lag' design needed to address 'time of measurement' effects (involving comparisons of several cohorts at different times) would have been beyond the scope and time limitations of the present research.

The second disadvantage of the cross-sectional research design is that it provides limited information on the progressive and dynamic nature of the individual and their environment. For example, by collecting data on individual coping strategies little information is gained on the processes which might be involved in preferring one type of coping strategy above another. The very nature of a cross-sectional design captures the process only at a specific point in time, and this limitation means that it is not usually possible to discern some of the developmental processes in the detail necessary to draw precise conclusions about causal relationships. For example, both the low life satisfaction group and the high life satisfaction group showed high levels of inter-role conflict. Whilst this finding is interesting it does not allow any clear insight into whether life satisfaction

determines the experience of inter-role conflict, or whether inter-role conflict leads to perceptions of life satisfaction. The dynamic (real-time) relationships between these two variables cannot be inferred, partly because of the choice of cross-sectional design, and partly because of the nature of the variables being measured.

8.3 Future research

Several areas for future research are suggested in relation to the key findings discussed above. Whilst study one shows the frequency of coping strategies used for inter-role conflict and role overload it does not include data collection on the process of coping used for role strain. It would be of considerable interest to investigate whether some types of inter-role conflict elicited particular types of coping strategies which other types of inter-role conflict did not. For example, is the conflict between the 'parent' and 'work' roles normally addressed by problem-focused coping or by emotion-focused coping? The types of coping strategies used specifically for conflict between pairs of roles would assist in furthering the debate about situation/personality based coping strategies for role strain.

Secondly, study one investigated participants' responses to how effective they considered their coping strategies to be, asking them to rate these on a 1-10 scale. Although participants provided valuable information to this effect, this area of research could usefully be developed further. More data is required on factors participants took into account when evaluating the effectiveness of their coping strategies. The most common measure used for evaluating whether a coping strategy is effective or not is the extent to which it reduces distressing emotions. However, participants might have given consideration to other factors, such as the effect of a particular coping strategy upon their families and colleagues. It is also possible that this may be more of an unconscious process for some individuals than others. Indeed, the extent to which coping might be a habitual response merits further work and could also cast light on the personality versus situation-determined debate in coping research.

Thirdly, study two showed how the number of role demands was related to high and low life satisfaction. This area of research would benefit from further work to determine the exact nature and function of role demands. The current study considered factors such as the number of children under the age of 12 years, or the need to work out of economic necessity, were each considered factor constituted one role demand. Further research needs to examine the nature of these and perhaps other role demands which have a relationship with life satisfaction. It could be that a cumulative effect is at play, or it may be that some role demands out-weigh others and are more susceptible to producing role overload or inter-role conflict. Also, social support plays a major part in determining the extent to which any woman who combines multiple role demands can effectively meet the requirements of these demands. Consequently, the importance and value of social support needs to be considered in some detail in order to examine how it influences the relationship between role demand and life satisfaction.

Fourthly, study two showed that coping strategies reported by the 'high' and 'low' life satisfaction groups differed significantly only in that the 'low' life satisfaction group reported greater use of 'less effective' coping. This was an anomalous finding because differences were also expected on problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies and, as such, it requires further attention. It would be beneficial to consider why the difference in coping is concentrated in the 'less effective' domain. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to investigate the process or interactive influence between life satisfaction and coping strategies using longitudinal methods. This might assist in identifying the extent to which coping determines life satisfaction, or life satisfaction determines coping, or whether the two variables are determined by some other factor(s).

Finally, study three showed a significant difference between the coping strategies used by those scoring 'high' and 'low' on neuroticism. This difference suggests that, compared with those scoring low on neuroticism, those individuals with high scores used less problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies and a greater number of 'less effective' coping strategies. This particular area is fertile for future research because it raises a number of interesting questions about personality determinants of coping

strategies. For instance, would the same coping strategies be used by 'high' and 'low' neuroticism groups when specific situations such as role overload or inter-role conflict are considered. The dynamic relationship between coping and personality require further research in order to determine the extent to which neuroticism and coping are a function of exposure to a stressful event or a reaction to it.

8.4 Conclusion

In the field of role involvement, there are two fundamental positions, the Role Accumulation Hypothesis and the Scarcity Hypothesis. The former emphasises the positive aspects of multiple role involvement, whereas the latter supports the notion that multiple role involvement leads to role strain. In order to investigate the nature of women's multiple role involvement, three quantitative and one qualitative study was undertaken. Overall, the findings from this research provide support for the Scarcity Hypothesis that role involvement leads to role strain. The studies undertaken in this thesis have used a number of different methodologies which have provided a means of triangulating data. For example, many of the quantitative findings were confirmed and elaborated further by the use of the case study method. The diary methodology used in study one allowed for the inclusion of multiple perspectives from individual participants prior to the construction of the subsequent interviews. Both of these approaches serve to increase the validity of the findings subsequently presented.

In summary, whilst the key findings from all four studies provide support for the Scarcity Hypothesis, they also help clarify the Role Accumulation and Scarcity Hypothesis debate by providing actual figures. Multiple role involvement is beneficial when up to three role demands are considered but, beyond three role demands, life satisfaction scores are low. The findings from this thesis suggest that when women are engaged in multiple roles, they most commonly experience inter-role conflict. This type of role strain is followed most frequently by role overload. The greatest conflict seems to occur between the 'work' and 'parent' roles, perhaps surprisingly, the least amount of conflict occurs between the 'spouse' and 'parent' roles. Findings also suggest that the coping strategies varied according to the type of role strain reported. For example, with inter-role

conflict, emotion-focused coping is most frequently reported whereas with role overload, it is the so-called superwoman coping strategy which is most commonly reported. In both cases, seeking assistance is reported to be used the least, or not reported at all. The interview data suggests that this finding is due to the lack of social support available to many women.

The key findings suggest that the reported coping strategies might depend upon at least two other factors: life satisfaction and personality. In the former, individuals who report low scores on life satisfaction also report using a significantly high level of coping strategies which are deemed to be 'less effective' when compared with those individuals who have high scores for life satisfaction. With regards to personality, the findings from this thesis suggest that individuals with high scores on the neuroticism scale report using less problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, but much more 'less effective' coping strategies compared with individuals who scored low on neuroticism. The use of contrasted groups has helped progressively focus upon those issues which determine the experience of role involvement for women who occupy multiple roles. For example, the use of contrasted groups, (determined by respondents own responses) has allowed 'low' and 'high' groups on both the life satisfaction and the neuroticism scale to be used in comparison when considering role strain and coping strategies. This particular method has been useful in illuminating further the relationship between individual reported life satisfaction and personality. These factors were initially identified by respondents as influencing and determining the choice of coping strategies in role combination.

In the introduction of this thesis it was stated that women have been engaged in their spousal, parental and work roles since prehistoric times. However, at different times in history the combination of multiple roles is encouraged and considered to be healthy for the individual, the family and society. At other times the nature of women's work roles, particularly when combined with their parental responsibilities, is questioned along with the potential influence on the family and society generally. Western Society also expects women to strive hard and to succeed in their family and work roles, and this success is often measured by an individual's ability to effectively cope with the various pressures in

their lives. This thesis has considered a number of variables which influence women's experience of multiple role involvement. It has addressed issues, and provided an insight into that experience, as well as suggesting potential practical applications of the findings. It has also made recommendations for areas of further research which will contribute further to the theoretical debates in this area. Several methodologies have been used in order to enrich as well as triangulate much of the data collected and subsequently allow the researcher to be more confident about the findings. If just one woman benefits as a result of either the insights or practical recommendations made in this thesis, the author will have achieved more than one lifetime ambition.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Demographic information for study one

ALL RESPONSES WILL BE TREATED AS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

- 1) Name
- 2) Age
- 3) Number of children
- Ages
- 4) Length of time you took off work?
-
- 5) Length of time you have been back at work?
-
- 6) When did you leave your last paid job?
-
-
- 7) Reason for leaving?
-
- 8) Did you leave and return to this present job?
-
- 9) During your career break did you do any other work? State part-time, full-time,
type of job/s etc.
-
- 10) During the time you have been off paid work, did you do any voluntary work?
.....

Please give as much detail as you can, e.g.:

How often?

Type of work, etc.

.....

APPENDIX 2

Diary on the return to work

Monday

- 1) What caused you stress and why?
- 2) How stressful was it? 1.....10
- 3) What did you do in order to cope with it?
- 4) How effectively did you cope? 1.....10
- 5) What should you have done as well and/or instead?

APPENDIX 3

Demographic information for study Two

- 1) Name
- 2) Address
.....
- 3) Course
- 4) How old are you? Under 25..... 25-34..... 34-44.....
 45-54..... 55-64..... 65+.....
- 5) Are you single? Living with partner?
Separated/divorced/widowed? Married?.....
- 6) Do you have any children? Yes?..... No?
- 7) If yes, how many and how old are they?

Age	At home	Left home	Away at school/univ/college
Under 1
1 - 4
5 - 10
11 - 15
16 - 18
19 +
- 8) Do you have dependent relative(s)? No? Yes-mother?.....
Yes-father?..... Yes-other? (please specify)
- 9) Do you have any of the following to help with the children?

relatives	friends	occasional childminder
regular childminder/nanny/aupair	school/playgroup/nursery	
creche	none of these	other (please specify)
- 10) What is your occupation? If it has changed in the last 3 years please state what your previous occupation was?

now	f/t	p/t
previously	f/t	p/t
- 11) If your occupation changed in the last 3 years what was the reason?
.....
- 12) What is the main reason for working? (Tick all that apply):

I/we need the money	I want to pursue my career
I like the companionship/interest	Other
- 13) Has your job been influenced by any of the following?:

husband's needs/wishes	needs of dependent relatives
children's needs/wishes	other people's opinions
financial	none of these other

- 14) What attracted you to your current job?
flexible hours..... salary..... benefits..... easy travel..... good prospects
liked the people..... first one available..... other.....
- 15) What is your income? Total household (a), personal (b):
under £5000 a).... b).... £5000-9999 a).... b).... £10,000-14,999 a)..... b).....
£15,000-19,999 a)..... b).... £20,000+ a)..... b).....
- 16) What education/professional qualifications do you have?
none cse/o-level A levels degree
professional other
- 17) How soon after the birth of your last child did you return to work?
Straight after maternity leave within 2 years
when the child went to primary school when the child went to secondary
school when the child had grown up other

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING

APPENDIX 4

Life Satisfaction Questionnaire Newland Park Association

For each aspect of your life indicate how satisfied you feel about it at the present moment.

	Not Satisfied				Very Satisfied	
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. The house or flat you live in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The local district you live in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Your standard of living: the things you can do and buy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The way you spend your leisure time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Your present state of health.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The education you received at school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The job training you have received.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Your social life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Your family life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. What you have accomplished in life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. What the future seems to hold for you.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. The state of law and order in Britain today.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Moral standards and values in Britain today.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Britain's reputation in the world.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 5

Inter-Role Conflict Questionnaire

Listed below are situations which commonly occur in the life of married couples. I am interested in knowing the degree of internal conflict within yourself that each of these particular situations poses for you at this time or stage in your life. Please use the following 5-point scale to indicate in your opinion, how much internal conflict each of the following situations presently poses for you. If a situation is not applicable, circle N/A.

	1	2	3	4	5	
	causes no internal conflict	slight internal conflict	some internal conflict	moderate internal conflict	high internal conflict	
1) Putting yourself first in terms of your work versus your spouse putting themselves first in terms of their work.						
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
2) Wanting to be recognised at a high level in terms of your work versus wanting to maximise your personal development.						
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
3) Supporting your child's recreational activities versus spending time on your career development.						
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
4) Your need for time with your spouse versus your spouse's need for time with you.						
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
5) Attending social functions which supports your spouse's career versus attending functions congruent with your own interests.						
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
6) Giving priority to your family versus giving priority to yourself.						
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
7) Feeling that your spouse would be unable to function and keep themselves together if they did not succeed career-wise versus wanting to put yourself first career-wise.						
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5

	1	2	3	4	5	
	causes no internal conflict	slight internal conflict	some internal conflict	moderate internal conflict	high internal conflict	
8)	Wanting to advance career-wise versus wanting to have a family.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
9)	Spending most evenings on work-related activities versus spending most evenings with your family.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Entertaining the colleagues of your spouse versus using your recreational time for your own needs.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Devoting recreational time to yourself versus devoting recreational time to your child.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Handling household management yourself versus feeling that your spouse should share household responsibilities.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Wanting to be alone versus your child wanting to be with you.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Your attitudes in regard to extramarital relationships versus your spouse's attitudes to extramarital relationships.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Feeling it is more important for you spouse to succeed in their work versus feeling it is more important for you to succeed in your work.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Hiring a child-care person so that you and your spouse can have uninterrupted time together versus being with your child.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
17.	The life style you prefer versus the life style preferred by your spouse.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4	5

	1	2	3	4	5
	causes no internal conflict	slight internal conflict	some internal conflict	moderate internal conflict	high internal conflict
18. Feeling an overload in household responsibilities versus not trusting others to perform them.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
19. Taking responsibility for the needs of your child versus wanting your spouse to take more responsibility in this area.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
20. Spending prime time developing And maintaining the relationship with your spouse versus spending prime time developing and maintaining the relationship with your child.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
21. Taking a vacation by yourself versus taking a vacation with your spouse.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
22. Leaving a satisfactory work environment because your spouse's career aspirations versus staying in this environment despite your spouse's career aspirations.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
23. Spending time with your spouse versus spending time with your colleagues.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
24. Wanting your spouse to devote participate in household management versus your spouse wanting to devote their time to their own career development.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
25. Wanting to devote time to your work versus your spouse wanting you to spend time with them.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
26. Letting your work consume nearly all your time and energy versus devoting time to the development of outside interests.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4

	1	2	3	4	5
	causes no internal conflict	slight internal conflict	some internal conflict	moderate internal conflict	high internal conflict
27. Your child's requesting that you stay at home with him or her versus your following the routine of your usual work schedule.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
28. Wanting to be a 'good' spouse versus being unwilling to risk taking the time from your work.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
29. Devoting a large percentage of time to the raising of your family versus devoting a large percentage of time to your work.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
30. Advancing your career goals versus developing meaningful relationships.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
31. Doing what you know you need to do to advance in your work versus doing what you would prefer to do in your work.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
32. Feeling burdened from child care responsibilities versus not trusting others to perform them.					
	N/A	1	2	3	4
33. In general how much total conflict do you experience? (1 = no conflict, 5 = extremely high conflict)					
	N/A	1	2	3	4

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

APPENDIX 6

COPE - Inventory

This questionnaire is interested in how people respond when they confront difficult or stressful events in their lives. This questionnaire asks you to indicate what you generally do and feel when you experience stressful events. Think about what you USUALLY do when you are under a lot of stress.

Using the response choices (1,2,3 or 4) listed below select one and write by the item number stated. Please try to respond to each item separate in your mind from each other item. Choose your answers thoughtfully, and make your answers as true FOR YOU as you can as there are no right or wrong answers

- 1 = I usually don't do this at all
- 2 = I usually do this a little bit
- 3 = I usually do this a medium amount
- 4 = I usually do this a lot

1. I try to grow as a person as a result of the experience.
2. I turn to work or other substitute activities to take my mind off things.
3. I get upset and let my emotions out.
4. I try to get advice from someone about what to do.
5. I concentrate my efforts on doing something about.
6. I say to myself "this isn't real."
7. I put my trust in God.
8. I laugh about the situation.
9. I admit to myself that I can't deal with it, and quit trying.
10. I restrain myself from doing anything too quickly.

11. I discuss my feelings with someone.
12. I use alcohol or drugs to make myself feel better.
13. I get used to the idea that it happened.
14. I talk to someone to find out more about the situation.
15. I keep myself from getting distracted by other thoughts or activities.
16. I daydream about things other than this.
17. I get upset and am really aware of it.
18. I seek God's help
19. I make a plan of action.
20. I make jokes about it.

21. I accept that this has happened and that it can't be changed.
22. I hold off doing anything about it until the situation permits.
23. I try to get emotional support from friends or relatives.
24. I just give up trying to reach my goal.
25. I take additional action to try to get rid of the problem.
26. I try to lose myself for a while by drinking alcohol or taking drugs.
27. I refuse to believe that it has happened.
28. I let my feelings out.
29. I try to see in a different light, to make it seem more positive.
30. I talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.

31. I sleep more than usual.
32. I try to come up with a strategy about what to do.
33. I focus on dealing with this problem, and if necessary let other things slide a little.
34. I get sympathy and understanding from someone.
35. I drink alcohol or take drugs, in order to think about it less.
36. I kid around about it.
37. I give up the attempt to get what I want.
38. I look for something good in what is happening.
39. I think about how I might best handle the problem.
40. I pretend that it hasn't really happened.

41. I make sure not to make matters worse by acting too soon.
42. I try hard to prevent other things interfering with my efforts at dealing with this.
43. I go to movies or watch TV, to think about it less.
44. I accept the reality of the fact that it has happened.
45. I ask people who have had similar experiences what they did.
46. I feel a lot of emotional distress and find myself expressing those feelings a lot.
47. I take direct action to get around the problem.
48. I try to find comfort in my Religion.
49. I force myself to wait for the right time to do something.
50. I make fun of the situation.

51. I Reduce the amount of effort I'm putting into solving the problem.
52. I talk to someone about how I feel.
53. I use alcohol or drugs to help me get through it.
54. I learn to live with it.
55. I put aside other activities in order to concentrate on this.
56. I think hard about what steps to take.
57. I act as though it hasn't even happened.
58. I do what has to be done, one step at a time.
59. I learn something from the experience.
60. I pray more than usual.

APPENDIX 7

Demographic Information for Study Three

1) Name (optional)/ number.....

2) Year: 1st () 2nd () 3rd () 4th ()

3) Age: Under 20 () 20-24 () 25-29 () 30-34 () 35-39 () 40-44 () 45-50+()

4) Are you single () married/living with a partner () separated () divorced ()

other (detail)

5) Number and age of children in your household: none ()

under 1 () 1-4 () 5-10 () 11-15 () 16+ ()

6) Spouse's current employment status: full-time () part-time ()

unemployed () other (detail)

7) Spouse's current position

8) What is your total household income? Under £5000 () £5000-£9999 ()

£10,000-£14,999 () £15,000-19,000 () 20,000-24,000 () 25+ ()

9) Do you have dependent adult relatives? no () yes ()

please specify.....

10) If you have children do you have any of the following help with them?

No children () relatives () friends () regular childminder/nanny ()

occasional childminder () aupair () playgroup () school/nursery ()

APPENDIX 8

NEO-Five-Factor Inventory

NEO Five-Factor Inventory - Form S

Paul T. Costa, Jr., Ph.D., and Robert R. McCrae, Ph.D.

Instruction

Write only where indicated in this booklet. Carefully read all of the instructions before beginning. This questionnaire contains 60 statements. Read each statement carefully. For each statement fill in the circle with the response that best represents your opinion. Make sure that your answer is in the correct box.

Fill in SD if you *strongly disagree* or the statement is definitely false.

Fill in D if you *disagree* or the statement is mostly false.

Fill in N if you are *neutral* on the statement, you cannot decide or the statement is about equally true and false.

Fill in A if you *agree* or the statement is mostly true.

Fill in SA if you *strongly agree* or the statement is definitely true.

For example, if you strongly disagree or believe that a statement is definitely false, you would fill in the SD for that statement.

For Example				
<input type="radio"/> SD	<input type="radio"/> D	<input type="radio"/> N	<input type="radio"/> A	<input type="radio"/> SA

Fill in only one response for each statement. Respond to all of the statements making sure that you fill in the correct response. DO NOT ERASE! If you need to change an answer, make an 'X' through the incorrect response and then fill in the correct response.

1. I am not a worrier.
2. I like to have a lot of people around me.
3. I don't like to waste my time daydreaming.
4. I try to be courteous to everyone I meet.
5. I keep my belongings clean and neat.

6. I often feel inferior to others.
7. I laugh easily.
8. Once I find the right way to do something, I stick to it.
9. I often get into arguments with my family and co-workers.
10. I'm pretty good about pacing myself so as to get things done on time.

11. When I'm under a great deal of stress, sometimes I feel like going to pieces.
12. I don't consider myself especially 'light-hearted'.
13. I am intrigued by the patterns I find in art and nature.
14. Some people think I'm selfish and egotistical.
15. I am not a very methodical person.

16. I rarely feel lonely or blue.
17. I really enjoy talking to people.
18. I believe letting students hear controversial speakers can only confuse and mislead them.
19. I would rather co-operate with others than compete with them.
20. I try to perform all the tasks assigned to me conscientiously.

21. I often feel tense and jittery.
22. I like to be where the action is.
23. Poetry has little or no effect on me.
24. I tend to be cynical and sceptical of others' intentions.
25. I have a clear set of goals and work toward them in an orderly fashion.

26. Sometimes I feel completely worthless.
27. I usually prefer to do things alone.
28. I often try new and foreign foods.
29. I believe that most people will take advantage of you if you let them.
30. I waste a lot of time before settling down to work.

31. I rarely feel fearful or anxious.
32. I often feel as if I'm bursting with energy.
33. I seldom notice the moods or feelings that different environments produce.
34. Most people I know like me.
35. I work hard to accomplish my goals.

36. I often get angry at the way people treat me.
37. I am a cheerful, high -spirited person.
38. I believe we should look to our religious authorities for decisions on moral issues.
39. Some people think of me as cold and calculating.
40. When I make a commitment, I can always be counted on to follow through.

- 41. Too often, when things go wrong, I get discouraged and feel like giving up.
- 42. I am a cheerful optimist.
- 43. Sometimes when I am reading poetry or looking at a work of art, I feel a chill or a wave of excitement.
- 44. I'm hard-headed and tough-minded in my attitudes.
- 45. Sometimes I'm not as dependable or reliable as I should be.

- 46. I am seldom sad or depressed.
- 47. My life is fast-paced.
- 48. I have little interest in speculating on the nature of the universe or the human condition.
- 49. I generally try to be thoughtful and considerate.
- 50. I am a productive person who always gets the job done.

- 51. I often feel helpless and want someone else to solve my problems.
- 52. I am a very active person.
- 53. I have a lot of intellectual curiosity.
- 54. If I don't like people, I let them know it.
- 55. I never seem to be able to get organised.

- 56. At times I have been so ashamed I just wanted to hide.
- 57. I would rather go my own way than be a leader of others.
- 58. I often enjoy playing with theories or abstract ideas.
- 59. If necessary, I am willing to manipulate people to get what I want.
- 60. I strive for excellence in everything I do.

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